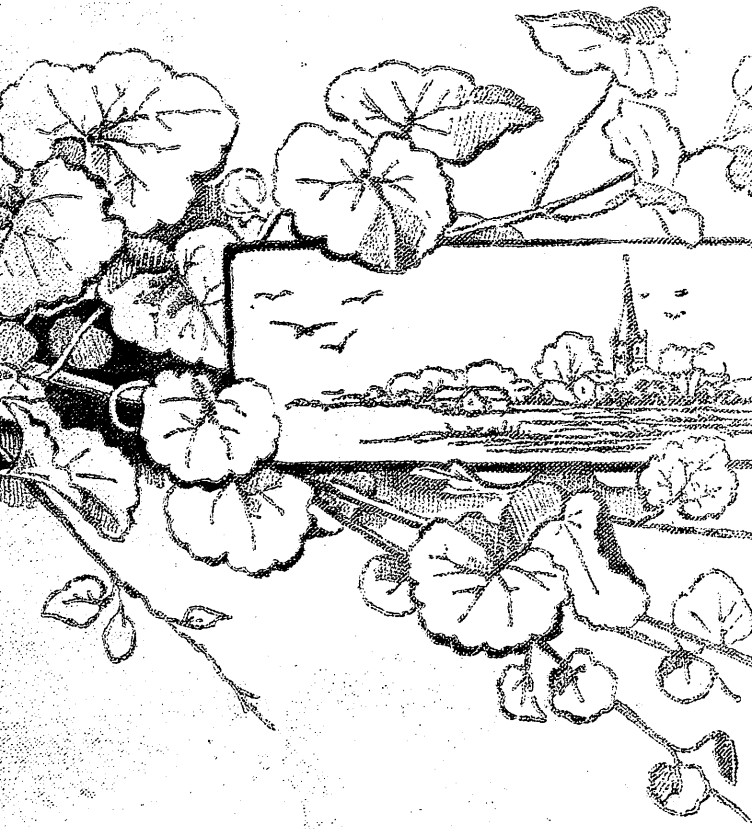

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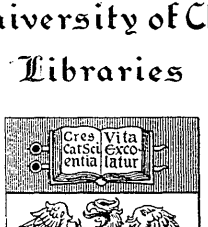

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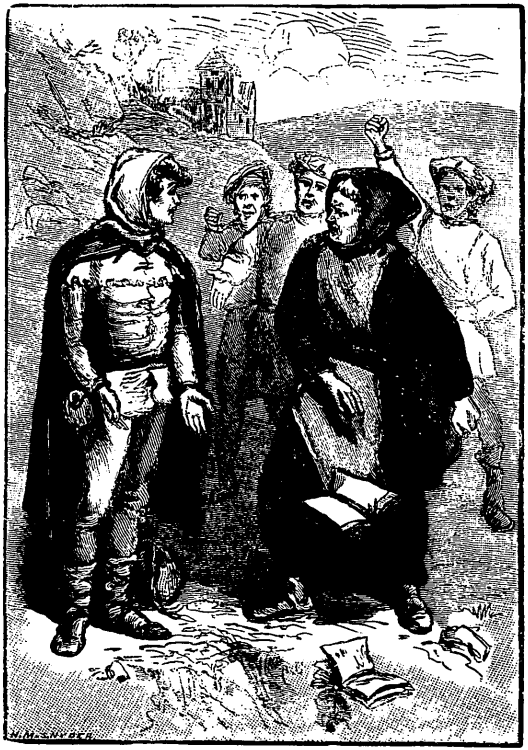

Montalto. Frontispiece.

Page 39.

MONTALTO;

OR,

THE VAUDOIS MARTYRS OF CALABRIA.

BY

MISS L. BATES.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Count Montalto's Proposal.....	5
II.	Emigration to Calabria.....	15
III.	Arrival of Barba Gilles.....	22
IV.	Popish Plottings Begin.....	28
V.	The Hawker and the Priests.....	37
VI.	Vaudois Worship in the Forest....	41
VII.	Visit to Spinello Castle.....	55
VIII.	Lady Aurelia and Teresa.....	62
IX.	Christina and Roderi the Curé....	72
X.	An Interview with Cardinal Alexandrini.....	87
XI.	Andrea's Forebodings.....	94
XII.	Barba Gilles in Venice.....	104
XIII.	Papal Display at Montalto.....	115

CHAP. PAGE

XIV.—Paschal and Marquet in Prison.... 127

XV.—Martyrdom of Paschal at Rome.... 146

XVI.—Marcel hurried to Prison..... ... 155

XVII.—Geoffrey's Martyrdom and Victor's Daring.... 165

XVIII.—Pietro and Imola in Venice..... . 177

XIX.—Baseness of Lady Portia and Risaldo..... . . 187

XX.—Christina and Chaffrey discover Marcel's Prison..... 202

XXI.—Marcel delivered from the Dungeon... 216

XXII.—Filostrato and his Polacca..... 224

XXIII.—Christina visits the Empty Dungeon. 231

XXIV.—Rescue of Countess Montalto and Isera..... 242

XXV.—Last Notices of Fra Geoffrey and Marcel..... 250

MONTALTO.

CHAPTER I.

COUNT MONTALTO'S PROPOSAL.

IN the autumn of 1340 two young men stopped for the night at a hostelry in Turin. In their bronzed faces, black eyes, and short, crisp hair there was nothing to distinguish them from the majority of peasants; their steeple hats, blue vests, and leggins fastened with bright buttons, were the same. The quick intelligence of their faces, however, was beyond that usually seen in foot-travellers.

Sitting on the stone bench outside the hostelry, the calm self-possession of the peasants, as well as their apparent superior understanding, attracted the attention of a young Italian gentleman, and, drawing near, he asked them of their journey and whither it tended. An ingenuous

blush suffused the face of the elder, who was called Andrea:

"We are from the valleys," looking frankly into the face of the stranger. "It is doubtless known to thee that in Piedmont there are few fields to cultivate in comparison with the number of the people; and, as we are young and strong, we waited to see the harvest gathered in, and then set forth on our journey, hoping that God would direct us to a spot where we can live by the fruit of our toil."

"If you do not mind crossing the mountains I can direct you to such a spot," said the stranger, still more pleased with the manly bearing of Andrea.

"Where we shall have fields to till, and where we can live in the enjoyment of our religion?" asked Waldo.

"Do you so highly prize the faith of your fathers?" questioned the Italian.

"Wherever we go, the tabernacle of the Lord shall go before us," answered Andrea.

"The land to which I will point you will leave you at liberty to worship God according to the custom of your valleys—a land with

beautiful streams, and hills covered with all manner of fruit trees according to the soil, such as olive and orange trees; in the plains are vines and chestnuts; along the lower hills, walnuts, oaks, and beeches; on the crests of the mountain, larches and firs."

"Such a beautiful country, and nobody to cultivate its fields! Where can such a land be found?" exclaimed Waldo.

"Go with me to Calabria and I will show you such a land," returned the stranger.

The faces of Andrea and Waldo grew serious. Calabria was far distant from their valley. What would their friends think of it? and would any be won to accompany them? It was a difficult matter to decide. The more the young men thought of it, the more they were drawn to their native valleys, feeling how almost impossible it would be to turn their backs upon that which had been, and was even now, their home. Still, was it not a providential leading, bringing them there at the exact time to meet the nobleman as he passed?

"We cannot answer until we have seen our people," observed Andrea with blanched cheeks

and quivering lips. Never before had he realized how dear were the narrow valleys he had been so anxious to leave.

"There is no doubt but it will be better for us," said Waldo. "It is certain there are more laborers than fields to work. If only we can persuade a goodly number to join us! As the land is so fine, we can count upon vineyards, leaving our old homes to those who are not as well able as we are to make a long journey for the purpose of establishing themselves upon new soil."

"A question like this must have deliberation," returned Andrea. "The happiness of those who go, as well as of those who remain, must not be idly dealt with. While we go to better our condition, we must have in view the extension of our religion. We must consult with our barba. To go without his blessing would not profit us."

"Perhaps we can prevail upon one or more to accompany us," suggested Waldo.

"There is no denying that a spirit is abroad hostile to our views. There are those who affirm that we have departed from the faith;

they denounce us as heretics, and even go so far as to forbid our reading the Sacred Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. If we would preserve our liberty, we must enlarge our boundary. We must acquire wealth and importance as a people, in order that we may defend ourselves and our faith from those who in time may be disposed to crush us if we fail to yield to their exactions."

"As for separating from the faith," interrupted Waldo, "there could not be a greater absurdity. It is easy to prove that we are in a direct line from the apostolic church. That church did not die with the persecution of the saints. The Ambrosian office for which we are reproached reaches back to that time, and the Epistle to the Laodiceans extends to the same date."

"Our enemies are strong; it does not suit them to lose any of their power or to abate or annul the least of their dogmas," Andrea answered.

"True;" and Waldo smiled encouragingly as he spoke. "Our enemies are strong; still, I cannot think that they will be permitted to

overthrow our doctrine. They may scatter us as the leaves are scattered before the autumn wind, but they cannot prevail."

"Our hope is in God," Andrea said in a reverent voice. "Wherever we go, the Bible must be our guide. And if the day comes when these pagans are too strong for us, the God of our fathers will not desert us."

They were now come to a spreading chestnut, and near it they perceived a spring of limpid water. At once Andrea threw himself down on the short, crisp grass, unstrapped his wallet, and took from it a loaf of black bread, with cheese made of goat's milk.

"The more we eat the lighter will be our burden," was said lightly.

Laying aside their steeple-crowned hats, while the breeze rippled through the chestnut leaves, Andrea raised his hand and invoked a blessing upon the simple fare—a prayer rather than a blessing, for he did not forget to bring in the arms of his faith the loved ones from whom they were parted, asking God to protect their humble homes; above all, committing to him the plans they had in view, and asking him to de-

cide for them. This done, the two ate their black bread and filled a horn cup with water from the spring, cheerful and happy in spite of the new burden.

To decide upon leaving home for the purpose of settling a strange country requires firmness and no little courage. Resolutely to cut loose from old moorings stirs the heart and tries the principles of the man. Besides, the young Vaudois had yet to obtain the consent of their parents; then they must induce others of their friends and neighbors to join them.

"And if they do not choose to go?" said Waldo as Andrea suggested the names both of men and women.

"The hand of God is in it," was the reply. "Did the nobleman not tell us that it is a delightful country, in every way adapted to our wants, with but few inhabitants, giving us space to grow into a great people? If our friends do not choose to go, we must ask others, although it would grieve my heart to see dissension between us."

"It will be a long journey, but we shall still be in Italy;" and Waldo looked up to the white

sailing clouds. "If not as blue, we shall have softer skies."

"And the same God to guide us, Waldo;" and Andrea gathered a few wild flowers and fastened them to his vest.

As the youths entered the valley they met the flocks led down from the heights by young girls, their short black skirts and laced bodices setting off their plump figures, their cheeks rosy with health, and their sparkling eyes full of vivacity.

At the foot of the mountain was a well with a thatched roof, and a rude windlass by which the water was drawn up into a long wooden trough. As the laughing girls came up, what was their surprise to find the water drawn and Andrea and Waldo waiting to see them home!

"We thought you still in Turin," said Joan, while her cheeks crimsoned. "Lucile was sure you would not return for a week."

"Our business did not require time, and when finished we had no desire to remain. As yet, this valley is the dearest spot in the world to us."

"It always will be to us, Andrea;" and Joan

pointed to the eastern hills tinged with the glory of the setting sun. "Can anything be more lovely?"

"Would you feel sorry to leave it, Joan?"

"What mean you, Andrea? Surely you do not think of leaving the valley?"

"We are too many for our lands, Joan. Our fathers are too old to make new homes, and our little ones are not accustomed to rough ways. Besides, is it not our duty to plant churches as well as to plant vineyards? Shall we be excused if we fail to carry our religion where it can be seen and acknowledged of all men?"

"But, Andrea, there must be some to lead us at home, as well as to carry our religion abroad. Who so well able to do this as you?" and there was a touching tenderness in Joan's voice that struck to the heart of Andrea.

"Would it be a cross to you to be one to establish the faith of our fathers in a new land? Is it too much to ask, Joan?"

It was well that the flocks required little care. Drinking their fill at the well, they turned homeward, leaving the young people to follow at their leisure. Standing upon the last of a

chain of low hills, Andrea and Joan looked upon their humble homes, the dusky vineyards from which the grapes had just been gathered, with vines still clinging over the doors and windows. White-haired men sat resting themselves outside their dwellings, while little children played at their feet, and older ones filled their pitchers at the cistern, making ready for the evening meal.

"It never looked to me half as beautiful as now," whispered Joan.

Andrea's mother met him with a kiss, and when she saw that Joan was with him she begged the young girl to come in with a motherly tenderness that pleased Andrea. Then she brought fresh garments for her son, and, seating herself at the table with Joan beside her, she listened to Andrea's account of his trip to Turin, and what had been proposed to him by the Italian nobleman, Count Montalto.

CHAPTER II.

EMIGRATION TO CALABRIA.

ANDREA was a favorite. When it was known that his parents made no opposition to his going, an emigration was resolved upon. It was not thought proper, however, to take serious measures before acquainting themselves with the country in which it was proposed to dwell. For this purpose two of the fathers, accompanied by Andrea and Waldo, set out to see the land of which Count Montalto had spoken. It was a tedious journey, during which they suffered much. Still, they returned satisfied, and when they had made their report the work of preparation was commenced and went steadily on. Numbering the people, they first made choice by lot, and afterward, if one desired to go and another already chosen desired to remain, an exchange was permitted, so that all were content.

The young men made haste to marry; those who had flocks and lands sold them; mothers supplied their daughters with a goodly amount of linen; and packages were made of such things as could be carried over the mountains. It was a long journey, and carts could not be taken. Never before had those peaceful valleys known an agitation so great and so profound. Scarcely a family but sent some one of its members. The festivities that celebrated their domestic alliances were mingled with the grief of separation. Wherever the barbas were called to perform the nuptial ceremony there was need of consolation; tears were mingled with smiles, the hand-clasp of congratulation with the farewell of exiles who realized that they were going from homes that they should never behold again, looking upon the faces of parents for the last time, and that to the children they would soon become as strangers. Never had they spoken such words of tenderness, never had they felt how dear were the ties that bound them; and but for their faith and trust in God, many of them would at last have turned back.

When the day of departure came the entire Vaudois family, led by Barba Jacob in his long white robe, accompanied the colony to the foot of the mountains. Here they embraced and wept, praying to the God of their fathers to bless and abide with them, one part going out, the other to remain, at the two extremes of Italy.

It was a mournful spectacle—the young and strong taking their way over the mountain-ranges to Calabria, while the fathers and mothers and little children returned to homes from which much of the beauty and bloom had gone.

With but few pack-horses, the journey was of necessity long. The young women, unaccustomed to travel, grew footsore and weary; camping in the mountains without shelter, and sometimes wanting suitable food, many sickened and some died. But even when dark was the hour and bitter their need, they still trusted God's arm to deliver them; regretful longings for home were only momentary. Not alone were they seeking to make homes for themselves; they were carrying the gospel into a portion of country where it was not, and the

thought strengthened them and nerved them to go forward. Day by day they pressed onward up the mountains and across wide plains, each night thankful that they were one day nearer their promised land.

At length the lovely landscape of Calabria opened before them. It is said the sight almost overpowered them; sinking on their knees, the first thought was to thank God for his protecting care in leading them to a country so desirable, and to a place where under his abiding shadow they could live and become a people through which his name might be honored.

Count Montalto, with others of the nobility, received them with kindness and consideration. According to the terms agreed upon, the Vaudois were bound only to pay a certain quit-rent to the owners, and upon this were left at liberty to manage their agricultural labors according to their own pleasure. The right was granted to them of combining themselves in one or more independent communities; of naming their own rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical; and, finally, of imposing taxes and collecting them without being bound to demand any authorization or to

render any account of what they did. These conditions became a charter for the Vaudois; and the better to secure the rights thus given an authentic instrument was drawn up and sent to the King of Naples, Ferdinand of Aragon, and afterward confirmed by him.

With a lingering fondness for home, the colonists built houses after the fashion of their old dwellings. In memory of their journey they called the first town Borgo d'Altramontani. Vineyards were planted, and the fruits natural to the soil—oranges, olives, figs, and dates—received careful culture. Cattle of superior beauty filled the forests, and the cliffs and tops of the mountains were rich in fir trees, from which valuable resin was extracted in large quantities.

With this small colony as the nucleus, additions were made from time to time from all parts of the Alps where their brethren dwelt. Laying the foundations of towns, they never failed to plant churches, bringing the civilizing influences of the gospel to bear upon a land filled with superstition and wretchedness, presenting the same contrast which is remarked in

our day between Protestant and Catholic countries.

Peacefully enjoying the privileges which they had obtained, faithful in the payment of their taxes and their tithes, and satisfied to abide within the restricted circle of their own beliefs and affections, they might have been supposed to be reserved for the happiest destinies.

Struck with the improvements the Vaudois introduced in the lands entrusted to them, the Marquis of Spinello invited them to his estates likewise. He authorized them to surround with walls the towns which they built. For this reason they called the first La Guardia, as being appointed to perform the principal part in guarding their country. They had a good number of walled towns, each of them bearing the familiar name of the place they had left in the valleys. Sprung from all parts of the Alps, they found among themselves a representation of the whole Vaudois nation. Content in the land of their adoption, they frequently received visits from pastors of the valley, thus keeping strong the chain of intercourse and affection, bridging the distance by their unity with God

and with one another, upheld by a strong faith and the hope of one day meeting in the Father's house.

It is in this time, when walled towns were built and science flourished as well as religion, that our story lies. The good Andrea and his wife Joan have fallen asleep, while their descendants after the lapse of two centuries, bear their names and perpetuate their virtues.

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVAL OF BARBA GILLES.

THE day is fast closing; the distant mountain-sides are dusky with olives, and the vineyards glow and are lost in the purpling light. The air is full of sweetness, while golden gleams melt into pink and pearl, and the dim earth narrows to a vision circumscribed by near horizons.

In the door of a small dwelling, and almost hidden under the wealth of clustering vines, a woman sits at her wheel, while a tall youth and a fair young girl walk up and down the velvet slope, now stopping to exchange some words that touch upon the interests of the day, then looking away through golden and purple vistas as if in expectation.

The busy hum of the wheel has died away; still, the woman sits with drooping head and folded hands. Without intending it, she is sad.

Rumors are afloat; peaceable as Andrea is, he has enemies; thus calmly to follow the faith of his fathers is called "heresy." Why must this be? And is there danger from those who can find no accusation save of thus persistently following a creed more simple, more self-sacrificing, than their own? In that moment the persecutions of which she had read thrilled her heart. Would it be for her children to suffer? would their bodies be racked for the sole purpose of making them disavow the faith in which they had been reared? But why this unrest? Has not God been gracious? Loving his own, will he not defend them? Marquet is still looking into the marvel of color that runs up and down the eastern side of the mountains; he does not realize that his mother is troubled; only Christina knows. Poor child! she would willingly use words of comfort, but there are none. Then a happy thought seizes her; she kisses the pallid cheek.

"I hear the herd-bells; father must be near," said she.

With this the woman roused herself; her husband must not see a cloud upon her face.

Under the vines Christina spreads the table. A dish of honey stands in the centre, with a loaf white as the curds of which her father is so fond. Clusters of purple figs are temptingly arranged, and taking her pitcher she fills it at the spring, while Marquet and his mother go forth to meet and welcome Andrea.

"Father comes not alone; is it not the barba?" was asked as Marquet caught sight of a stranger with a long gray mantle and wearing a leather girdle.

"Barba Gilles!" exclaimed the mother; and she hastened her steps.

"God's blessing be upon thee, daughter, and upon thy house!" and the barba kissed the sweet uplifted face.

The tide of joy in the mother's heart rendered her words broken and fragmentary. Hardly thinking in what they would result, shadows had gathered in her heart and grew into the form of monsters. Deliberately her eyes feasted on the blackness; the dear face of the Master grew dim; his voice was not heard. Leaning upon herself, strength failed; the fear of the enemy overpowered her. After all, it is

but a rumor Marquet has caught; she will not sadden Andrea by repeating it, neither dim the joy of the barba's presence by anticipating an evil that may never come.

Partaking of the evening meal, Andrea goes to the brow of the hill and gives a low shrill whistle that echoes along the plains. It is the signal for the worshippers. It was an occasion of great Christian joy for those isolated souls to meet and pay their respects to the beloved under-shepherd. Eagerly they pressed around him, questioning him regarding the churches which he had visited in his journey and the brethren with whom he had met. Frequently the replies communicated melancholy news; then they prayed together and read and recited from the Scriptures.

According to the custom of primitive Christians, the barba not only received these humble believers, but he taught them, strengthening and edifying them in the gospel, visiting their sick, comforting the sorrowing—not given to rebuke, and still not sparing, if any were turned backward.

Like his first ancestors whom we have spoken

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Like his first ancestors whom we have spoken

of, Andrea was a leader, collecting tithes and taking them to the principal feudal lord, in this way becoming personally acquainted with the habits and manner of life of families far above him in point of worldly honor.

From the time the colony was first established the house of Montalto had been lenient. Educated in another faith, the present Count was in nowise a devotee of the Romish Church. With marked reverence for the Bible, he expressed himself as desiring to be guided by the doctrines it inculcated.

On one occasion, as Andrea was in earnest conversation with the count, a servant came to announce that the Countess was taken suddenly ill. In lack of a leech, Andrea used his lancet on the round, white arm, greatly to the relief of the fair woman, and ever after he was treated with the consideration, and almost with the kindness, of a friend.

Zealous for the honor of the primitive church, Andrea stirred the people, especially the pious women, to avail themselves of every opportunity for dropping words that might, under the Spirit's influence, spring up and bear fruit in

the hearts and lives of those who, seemingly so near, were in another sense so far from acknowledging the truth. This friendly intercourse with the lords of the soil was the foundation of the rumors that sowed enmity for the Vaudois. Before the barba left, the good wife became conscious that there was in reality room for fear. Still, her heart was strengthened; the God in whom she trusted would not forsake her, and his promises were to her and to her children.

CHAPTER IV.

POPISH PLOTTINGS BEGIN.

THE Castle of Montalto was a grim old building of dark gray stone, with ramparts and towers and loopholes, half fortress and half dwelling, such as are peculiar to times of storm and bloodshed, when safety depends upon thick walls, impenetrable recesses, and guarded passages, rather than upon skill in arms and the combined effect of ammunition and finished weapons. Built upon a high eminence overlooking the blue waters of the sea, it commanded a fine view of the adjacent country, and in time of war could easily be turned into a stronghold available by sea as well as by land.

This castle was said to have been built at the time when Attila went over to Illyricum and laid waste all the countries from the Euxine to the Adriatic. Battered and gloomy in the mass, there was one wing that spoke of a later

date and a different architecture. The walls were broken with windows opening into balconies and festooned with flowering vines of delicious sweetness; doors were free from ponderous bolts and bars that made them look as if opening into dungeons. The chapel likewise was of later finish, with an altar richly covered and walls that could boast of some of the rarest specimens of painting at the time in Italy.

Count Montalto was a man of liberal views. An enlightened Catholic, he did not seek to hide from the cardinal that he was desirous of a reform. The spirit of persecution in the church was to him the abomination of evil. His curé, Risaldo, was a strong man, a man ardently attached to the church, and also a wily statesman. Added to this, he was an intimate friend of the Cardinal Alexandrini, and anticipated himself the satisfaction of one day wearing the red hat of a cardinal.

This wily priest and ambitious statesman was the tutor of Count Montalto's children. Hence he was acquainted with the prosperity and enlargement of the Vaudois churches, and while his outward appearance was amiable, he was

careful to spy out their weak places and to inflame, if possible, the minds of the nobility against them. He was likewise particularly anxious to levy large tithes; and if they complained, he made this an open accusation against them. For months he had noticed a growing intimacy, the Vaudois Andrea coming frequently to see the Count. Even the children had met on terms of familiarity as equals. Evil in his heart was stirred. He would appeal to the Count, and if this did not answer, he would stir the authorities of Rome.

The Count was sitting with his head bent forward, smilingly watching his children as they played before the door. Notwithstanding the smile, there was a serious look on the manly face, and a sigh swept over his lips as he turned to the table and opened a document that lay before him. The Vaudois Andrea had just been with him, and the talk had been of the cruelty of the monk Borelli and the friar Veyletti in the persecution of the brethren in the North.

"It cannot be denied that the same spirit is with us. The curés are our enemies; they

make complaints against us. So long as their power is checked by the nobility we are safe, but let them gain the ascendency and we are crippled, if not cut off," remarked Andrea.

With well-meant kindness the Count called his attention to the freedom the Vaudois, as a people, had from the first enjoyed, the rapid growth of their towns, and the increased wealth of that portion of Italy since the colony was established:

"This argues well for the future, and if the curés sometimes make complaint, it is nothing serious."

"If our rulers were all more like Count Montalto, this would be true. We have reason to fear that this is not the case; the more we prosper, the more closely we are looked after by those who are little inclined to favor us or our church. We are a simple people; we take the word of God as it is; we claim the right to read it for ourselves, and to be governed by its dictates."

"This is likewise my wish," the Count replied. "I would be guided by the precepts and example of Christ. Depend upon it, good

friend, the interests of your church and your people will be duly cared for. You have towns; fortify them with walls if you will, and thus secure for yourselves places for defence if the time shall come for you to need it."

Frank and unsuspicious, the Count did not at the time imagine that Risaldo was plotting his undoing as well as the utter extermination of the Vaudois people.

The father of Risaldo was a retainer of the former Count; the sons were brought up together, and when Risaldo entered the church and the Count came into his inheritance the wily churchman asked of the cardinal the bestowment of a living in Calabria. A tutor as well as a priest, the children—of whom there were three—were subject to his guidance, and their intimacy with their Vaudois neighbors was closely scrutinized. This surveillance on the part of Risaldo stung Marcel, a lad of deep, fiery spirit, and a conflict was often waged, in which the priest always seemed to yield, but in truth it was only to throw the Count off his guard. The wily priest was gleaning all he could, and sending it to Rome to be again re-

modelled and moulded into what would finally prove satisfactory evidence against the Count himself.

While the Count was deliberating on what Andrea had said, and turning in his mind what he could best do to appease the spirit of suspicion already awakened, a bell struck, and in a moment Risaldo entered with a face as open and free as he had worn in his boyhood. Seating himself familiarly in the very chair Andrea had just left, he proceeded to speak of things of minor importance, and at length, by an easy transition, of the small town of St. Xisto, the inhabitants of which were disinclined to follow the ritualistic service common to all good Roman Catholics.

"When you take into consideration that these people originally came from a distant region, where they were not addicted to the ceremonies of the church, it will not seem strange," replied the Count. "As a people they are remarkable for honesty, charitable to the poor, punctual in paying their rents, and full of the fear of God."

"But do you not think they ought to conform

to the rules of the church?" Risaldo asked in a seemingly careless tone.

"They claim to be Christians; the spirit of their worship is the same; what matters it if they have a few processions, images, or lights more or less than others of the country?"

"It is possible that we do not see alike upon this question. To me it seems necessary that the forms of our religion be strictly adhered to. If these Vaudois do not bow to the Host, they ought to be made to bow."

"You cannot be in earnest," said the Count, looking with his truthful eyes into the face of the priest. "Our religion was not given to make us oppressors. We are to persuade and to teach, but coercion is not required of us."

The masked face revealed nothing, and the next remark came feelingly:

"You are no doubt right, and the honor of our church is safe in your hands. In my eagerness to see this people come into our fold my feelings led me too far. Coercion is not the best means to win them. I am glad to know that you are disposed to be lenient."

The room in which this audience was held

was only separated from that of the Countess by a richly-embroidered curtain, bordered with a heavy fringe that swept the marble flooring and kept it firm and seemingly immovable.

Scarcely had Risaldo taken his leave when a white arm swept the curtain aside and the Countess entered. One look, and the Count sprang to his feet:

"What is it, love, that troubles thee?"

"It may be foolish. I could not but think Risaldo's boldness was somewhat out of place, else his late visit to Rome has been to our hurt."

"How can this be? Cardinal Alexandrini is our friend; we are Catholics, and if I am lenient to the Vaudois, surely this cannot be set down to my injury. The prosperity of these quiet, inoffensive people increases the value of our lands and greatly enriches the revenues of the church."

"With so much said of heresy if he should see fit to accuse you!" interrupted the trembling woman.

"The Cardinal knows us too well;" and the Count laughed in spite of the suspicion lodged

in his own heart. Then in a tenderer tone, "You are feverish, and your fears distress you. Where is Merondel? It is a splendid night for a sail." And Count Montalto forced himself to appear light-hearted. If Risaldo was playing him false, he must watch, without permitting the priest to suspect that he was the least disturbed.

CHAPTER V.

THE HAWKER AND THE PRIESTS.

ST. XISTO was built on the slope of a low hill, with a wild and winding valley, at the bottom of which rushed a capricious stream—now a white thread of a brook in which children dabbled their feet and sailed their rude boats, then a torrent sweeping away the crossings in its maddened rush to the sea. The view was essentially romantic. A vast plain spread in all directions and with a variety of character; dusky vineyards were interspersed with groves of fruit trees; oaks and chestnuts clustered together; laughing glens and black, savage woods where herds of the far-famed Calabrian cattle roamed undisturbed.

The town, which just consisted of only a handful of simple dwellings, was the capital, with broad streets and a wall of defence for the

better security of the people. Schools of learning were also established, and men of science, among whom we find that Barlaam, the preceptor of Petrarch, imbibed the views and accepted the faith of the Vaudois.

In keeping with the usages of the church, missionaries were sent out. These men were trained to some profession or calling by which they could support themselves—men versed in the Scriptures and anxious to win souls to Christ. Going from house to house, they had abundant means not alone to exhibit their goods, but to awaken a spirit of inquiry among the people. A missionary was seen by some Romish priests to give a manuscript copy of the New Testament writings in the Romance language to a lady of rank. Following him into a rocky pass, they took possession of his goods, and finding several books — each of which they pretended to think heretical—they began to question the poor man; and when he answered boldly, not at all afraid of what they might do to him, they were angered only the more. Still, it was not yet the time when they dared do more than threaten him, and taking

down his answers they promised him a hearing another day.

"What is your doctrine?"

"That of the gospel."

"Do you go to mass?"

"No."

"Do you acknowledge the authority of the pope?"

"No."

"Do you acknowledge that of the king?"

"Yes, for 'the powers that be are ordained of God.'"

"But the pope is a power."

"So is the devil a power, but there is One greater," was the instant reply.

At these words they became so enraged that they had wellnigh killed him on the spot. But suddenly their anger changed, and, throwing his pack after him, they bade him begone from the neighborhood and never to return to it again.

"I will not go without my books," replied the fearless man.

"Take them, and away with yourself;" and, flinging them down the ravine, the priests and

their tools turned back, leaving the hawker to pick up his books and go on his way without further molestation.

This little episode in the life of a missionary had a significance that was well understood by the Vaudois. The books dubbed heretical were no more nor less than the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If they spared his life, it was because they feared to take it; the day might come, however. In consideration of this, the people gathered into towns and began to build walls for defence and protection in time of need.

CHAPTER VI.

VAUDOIS WORSHIP IN THE FOREST.

A BRIDGE of jasper seemed to stretch across the pass; the green old earth of Montalto was apparently crowned with ruby and gold; arrows of brilliant flame pierced the shadowy groves, and the distant hills were billowed in splendor. On a green slope overlooking the sea two youths were apparently reading from one book, but a close observer would have seen that their thoughts were not upon the open page. At length the book was closed, and, creeping a little distance apart, one still with his thumb and finger thrust between the leaves, the talk went on in low, fragmentary snatches, with a covert glance ready at any moment to open the book.

In the courtyard a chariot with cream-white horses, glittering with blue and silver, waited

the coming of a noble guest, while a cavalcade of ladies and stately cavaliers dashed out of the gateway, the quick patter of their horses' hoofs dying away in the distance and their gay streamers glancing like shafts of light. Farther on children and young girls were dancing to the slow measure of a pipe. With bewildering grace one of the fairest drew near the youth with the book, and, leaning over his shoulder, read from the half-closed page:

"How is this, Marcel? I thought you held one of the sacred books. Did not Christina give you one? and did she not say that I should read it?"

The girl drew herself up to her full height with a sweet dignity that enhanced every grace.

It was some time before Marcel spoke; then he said, with a strange tremor in his voice,

"Christina gave me one, and she expected, no doubt, that you would read it; she did not say this."

"It is a long time since she was last here, Marcel. Did she not say when she would come again?" the peach-like bloom of her cheeks changing to crimson as she spoke.

"She may not come again. These are perilous times, when it behoves young maidens to stay at home," was the reply.

"Does peril threaten Christina? Say it again, Marcel," in a pleading tone.

"It is hard to tell on whom or when the blow will fall. You heard of the poor hawker tormented because he would not go to mass?" Marcel asked.

"Surely, rumor spoke of such a thing. But when our father questioned for the purpose of making an example of men who would insult another for his faith, Risaldo said there was no truth in it, only a rumor, to do injustice to a priest."

"I wish Risaldo were in Rome! If I had the power our father has, I would appeal to the Viceroy," interrupted the brother of Marcel.

"Hush, Victor!" exclaimed Marcel; "the appeal may be made from the other side."

"What if it is?" and, springing to his feet, the youth walked up and down, as though action would cool the heated fever of his brain.

"The Viceroy is answerable to Pius IV.," answered Marcel.

"And why should Rome persecute these Christians? They are Catholic, in the true sense of the word. Risaldo admits that it is the church of Rome that has changed. It is no longer Catholic; it is papacy. The liberty of the gospel is unknown to them. Look at Val Gyron! I shudder when I think of it."

"That was in France," added Isera, by way of appeasing the excited spirit of Victor. "It was said that the Cardinal was sufficiently indignant."

"Rome is the grand centre. Her arms are long; not a valley but she claims; not a mountain-fortress but she will scale."

Steps were heard, and a tall, not ungraceful-looking figure approached.

"Hold, Victor! Your lesson is but ill studied, to stumble in this manner," exclaimed Marcel, who was even now occupied in reading the Annals of Ennius.

"I am glad to see you so studious," was said in a soft, pliant tone; and with charming ease Risaldo gathered up his loose robe bordered with scarlet and seated himself on the mossy turf. "If Victor trips, the fault lies with Isera,"

and the black, piercing eyes flashed into the rosy face of the young girl.

"I find it impossible to study in an hour like this," said Victor, with masterly command of himself. "Beautiful as are our sunsets, I have never seen one to rival this. One could almost imagine the doors of the celestial world ajar."

A boat with a purple sail hung over the distant water. The breeze had died away, and so perfect was the shadow that the dividing-line was scarcely perceptible.

Caia tripped over the slope with a dancing step:

"We want you, Isera. Victor, have you grown too staid to mingle in our games?"

"Forsooth, good cousin, I have a will to try my hand, and if I trip you will excuse me, or teach me a quicker way than Marcel knows."

With a pleasant smile Victor gives his arm to Isera, and, led by dancing Caia, they are soon taking part in the lively games.

Risaldo was a man of quick penetration, learned in the world's ways, and ready to adapt himself to the humor of the hour through the versatility of his sympathies. With his eyes

fastened on the magnificent picture of earth and sky, he said slowly,

"It is through the beautiful that we are lifted into spiritual life. We desire something beyond and without us. This is one reason why our church is so prosperous; the wants and needs of our nature are all supplied."

"Is there not danger lest too much stress be placed upon the outward form? If we worship with the spirit and with the understanding, may we not do this without the aids that wealth alone can bring?" asked Marcel.

"True; these outward forms are only the frame, the background, fitting, but not in themselves absolutely essential. The imposing ceremonies of our church call up a devotional spirit; the incense on the altar calls for praise from our hearts; and the lights ever burning are only a faint adumbration of the Spirit's influence; the splendor of the ritualistic service is only a type of the homage due and the adoration given in heaven."

"If these magnificent ceremonials enter so largely into the spirit of our worship, what will become of those who are so situated that they

cannot avail themselves of these types and adumbrations?"

"The church will help those who need help. All that is necessary to secure this assistance is to signify a willingness to conform to the requirements of our holy mother church."

"But if one cannot conscientiously?"

"There have always been and always will be heretics. It is the duty of the church to win these by mild measures if she can; if not, she must use her authority. Better to suffer here than to suffer hereafter."

"Does God hold the church responsible for individual sins and transgressions?"

"The church is not alone to teach; she is to command. God will surely hold her accountable for the loss of a single soul from paradise that might have been there had she used stern measures."

"Then why do we read that 'every one of us shall give account of himself to God'?"

The slightest perceptible smile touched Risaldo's lips:

"I see that you have been reading without proper interpretation. As an honored son of

the church I trust your faith is not weakened, neither your prayers wanting that she may be strong to overcome. I do not say it is not possible for a heretic to be forgiven, but for a child of the church who may fall into error there is no mercy."

"I honor the Catholic Church and reverence her institutions. I trust that years will only deepen my love, and my prayers are always for the spread of truth."

"I am glad to hear this," returned the priest, while a subtle expression flashed from his eyes. "It becomes us to stand faithful. Lenient as the church is, and disposed to adopt gentle measures, she knows how to be stern; she cannot countenance apostasy."

Calm as Marcel endeavored to appear, there was an expression on his face that the wily tutor interpreted to suit his own interest. Sending his gaze over the water, he said at length,

"I wonder what that boat may be? She seemed to set in this direction, then tacked suddenly."

"Waiting for a breeze," was the careless reply.

The sun had gone below the horizon; the chapel-doors were open. Floating out upon the evening air came the sweet vesper-bell. Scarcely had it died away when a gay cavalcade came sweeping up the slope into the courtyard. The merry games were laid aside. Risaldo rose, crossed himself, and kissed his crucifix. The chapel rapidly filled with worshippers; Marcel dropped into his place between Isera and Victor.

"I am not sure but Risaldo understands the boat. He did not see the signal, but he saw her tack," was said to Victor as they left the chapel. Then turning to Isera: "Ask him some knotty question that will require time; and if he hastens, ask still another. It becomes us to be prudent."

The moon hung like a silver shield against the blue background of the sky; the still waters were burnished like a mirror. Through the dim olive-groves Marcel and Victor picked their way to a wooded inlet where the small boat awaited them. With effort Victor restrained a joyful cry as a white-haired man stood ready to push off.

"We have no time to lose; I was half afraid you would not come."

"And I was more than half afraid," returned Marcel. "Had not Isera won Risaldo to explain the increasing differences in the autonomy of the Christian churches, leading Leo IX. to excommunicate the Patriarch of Constantinople, we had not come at all."

"Woman's wit is at all times profitable," replied the white-haired man, whom the youths addressed as Chaffrey. "I would not have you lose a word the barba says. He is an aged man; we cannot hope to see him with us again. Besides, we meet to-night outside the town. You could not have hoped to hear him explain the Scriptures had it been otherwise. I asked it as a grace."

"For which you have our thanks, good Chaffrey."

"If you can see and understand the truth in its simplicity, 'tis all I ask. In this dark land one has need of divine light."

"With us the question is how to gain this light?"

"Asking it of God for Christ's sake, as a

child says 'please' to its father when it asks for bread," was the glad response.

"To us this faith is very beautiful. Strange that all do not so regard it!" was Marcel's reply.

"It is not given to the natural heart to discern the things that pertain to the Spirit. God's grace in the heart is the key. Without this we fail to comprehend the tenderness of the Father's love in sending his Son, that we, through him, may be accepted."

"The best of it all is, we can go straight to him and ask for ourselves," cried Victor with enthusiasm. "How would our parents like to see us stand aloof and send in our petitions by Risaldo? You say God likes us to come and ask for ourselves?"

"Most certainly he does. He asks us to come. It is a hearty invitation, and he is never so well pleased as when we draw very near and lean upon him."

"The more we know of this, the more we long to feel his loving-kindness in our hearts. He knows how ignorant we are," said Marcel tenderly.

"He knows every thought of our hearts. All he asks is a hearty willingness on our part to be owned and loved by him."

The moon was slowly sailing up the sky as they anchored in an arm of the sea bordered with ancient trees. A circuitous, zigzag path led thence into a broken forest. In this wild place of worship the moonbeams, piercing through the leaves, brought out what seemed to be column and porch and nave of magnificent form and dimension.

Here were collected a goodly number of the Vaudois, listening with rapt attention and reverent feeling to the barba, whose mild face, white-flowing hair, and loose garments lent interest to the truth he was endeavoring to inculcate. Following Chaffrey, Marcel and Victor were still more impressed with the beauty of the simple service, the gentleness and touching tenderness in perfect keeping with the words. In speaking of the church the barba said:

"It is for us to maintain the sovereign authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith, and the efficacious mediation of an only Mediator

between God and man, even Jesus Christ. Above all, we desire the honor of God and the profit of the church, and that we may be faithful followers of Christ Jesus. When the Romish doctors say anything or affirm human opinion as a matter of faith, they fall into error. Herein is the cause of our separation. At whatever cost, the Bible must be our guide, its principles the foundation of our belief."

Then followed a short lesson, showing the love of God as a Father, holding up Christ as the open door through which repentant souls gain access to a reconciled Father, becoming his dear children, and as his children heirs of an inheritance incorruptible, glorious, and enduring for ever.

According to custom, the members were called upon to recite from the Evangelists, closing with a general confession and short catechism, all joining in prayer with the fervor and tenderness of those who feel the truth of what they utter, blessing him for forgiveness and loving-kindness; as it were, talking with God face to face.

As the audience retired, the elders of the

people gathered around the young strangers, and presented them to the barba, who received them in an apostolic manner, questioning them of their faith, and exhorting them to bear witness to the truth like men striving for the mastery in all things, and eager to receive the blessing of "Well done!" from the Master.

CHAPTER VII.

VISIT TO SPINELLO CASTLE.

RISALDO was called to Rome on business of vital importance to the church, he said, leaving his pupils, with Countess Montalto, to accept an invitation from the Marquis Spinello. Removed from the sea, the Marquis lived in more splendor than the neighboring nobility. The centre of a petty court, Spinello Castle was always attractive, and especially so to those unaccustomed to the festivities of capitals.

The journey was not long, and from the time the small cavalcade left their own park-gates their eyes were feasted with a continual display of beauty. Hamlets dotted the plains, together with forests and fruitful vineyards and orange-groves, giving them cause to appreciate the beauty of their Calabrian heritage.

"All this is to be attributed to the Vaudois," the Countess said to her sons "This portion

of our country was an uninhabitable waste; now it is a luxuriant garden, blossoming with beauty, and giving promise of an abundant harvest."

At the castle-gates they were met by the Marquis and Marchioness, with a cortège of ladies and gentlemen returning from the chase. Mounted upon fleet horses, they swarmed around the chariot of the Countess; then, suddenly opening, swept away through what seemed to be interminable paths and tangled forest-ways, coming in again at the open spaces, laughing and chatting, with music of bugle and horn and silver bells.

At dinner Marcel found himself by the side of a young Venetian lady, Aurelia Landino, niece of the Marchioness, a person of great brilliancy and wit. Alive to the excitement of the morning, Lady Aurelia spoke incidentally of the Vaudois, expressing surprise to find the faces of the women and children so very handsome.

"What did you expect?" Marcel asked with a smile.

"As a child I was told that they were born

with black throats, rough teeth, and cloven feet," laughing at the picture her childhood knew.

"I am thankful that you have seen them for yourself. Should you improve the opportunity to mingle with them, you will be led to admire their character as greatly as you now seem to admire their beauty."

"I shall not rest until I have done so. I never understood why our church regarded them with so much distrust."

"I could wish it nothing more than distrust; it amounts to persecution in many places," was answered boldly.

"Why is it?" and the expression of Lady Aurelia's face was strangely earnest.

"I can inform you," said a smooth-faced man sitting opposite. "The Vaudois are full of schisms; they claim to be something when they are nothing. All that our church aims to do is to bring them back to the true faith."

"Is coercion the best means to employ in order to win people to a higher life?" asked Lady Aurelia.

"Coercion is never used save as a last resort.

When the church has done all she can, she then makes bold to use authority."

"To a mind unprejudiced it will not be difficult to see which has kept the faith. The Vaudois are not schismatics; they maintain the absolute authority of the word of God, teaching the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ," said Marcel in a quiet voice.

"As Catholics we claim to be the inheritors of the church founded by the apostles;" and the steel-piercing eyes of the curé flashed into the face of the resolute youth.

"The church founded by the apostles has the name of Catholic, and was persecuted by the pagans. Afterward, becoming powerful and persecuting in its turn, it underwent a vitiation of its very nature in Catholicism, while the Vaudois continued simple, free, and pure as in the times of persecution."

Already Marcel had said more than he intended. He saw his imprudence, but where could he stop if once he undertook to answer? Lady Aurelia was a woman of tact. With a smile she turned to the curé, and demanded what he thought of the new altar-cover just re-

ceived from Florence, questioning him with reference to a slight alteration in the censers, with the addition of certain perfumes, whereby the odor would be more subtle and the cloud more perfect.

The tumult subsided; the face of the curé was smooth; his eyes no longer shone like drawn daggers. Marcel felt relieved, and the Countess breathed freely.

The Marchioness was taking a vote as to the way and manner of spending the evening. The important decision made, the guests withdrew to their respective apartments, to meet when the bugle sounded.

Marcel handed Lady Aurelia to the door. "I am very grateful;" and he raised the jewelled hand to his lips.

"You could not have said less. If there was blame, I deserve it."

"I cannot allow this, fair lady; and still I am glad that you do not condemn me."

"Leave it to me; I will explain to the curé," returned Lady Aurelia with a smile.

"Not with blame to yourself;" and Marcel withdrew in order to seek the Countess.

"You are very young, my son, to express an opinion publicly," said the Countess, throwing her arms around the neck of Marcel.

"It was not an opinion, mother. Lady Aurelia did not understand the question of separation, and before I could speak the curé interfered, calling the Vaudois schismatic; and then I was forced to explain."

"I know, my son, but it behooves us to be prudent. I sometimes fear your father is too outspoken. You only intended justice to this people. But should it get to the Cardinal in a garbled form—"

"My father is a good Catholic. I have no wish to dishonor our church."

"We live in critical times. Suspicion is abroad, with a zeal to create disorder. Try as I will, I cannot but think we are surrounded by enemies," returned the Countess in an anxious tone.

"As a family we have always maintained our honor. The Marquis Spinello is above reproach," persisted Marcel.

"True, but a word wrongly interpreted may awaken suspicion; the honor of the past will

prove no protection if once our name is leagued with heretics and unbelievers."

"Is there one would dare accuse us?" and the beardless lip trembled.

"I do not say there is, but there is a fear; it comes unbidden. For my sake you will be on your guard, my son?"

"I will, dear mother. Forgive me that I distressed you; I will be more prudent in the future."

"I do not ask you to deny your own convictions, but be slow to speak before those who will gladly make use of your words as an accusation against you."

Marcel bowed his thanks and withdrew.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY AURELIA AND TERESA.

THE Castle of Spinello abounded in curiosities. In the armory were collected weapons, shields, and helmets from the time of Romulus, crests and devices and blazoned insignia, each with a history of the times and events of a past age. In this room the young men spent a portion of the mornings; the Marquis was a man of brilliant thought, and had a fund of anecdotes that rendered him at all times an agreeable entertainer. The chaplain, Roderi, was no longer disturbed, and Marcel, retaining a vivid remembrance of his former imprudence, was careful to turn the conversation into channels divested of controversial interest.

Besides the armory and the chapel there were grand apartments with tapestries and silver hangings; marble staircases, with long,

cool corridors hung with paintings reflecting the mind and genius of the artist as well as the dress, manner, and religious state of the age. The Holy Family, variously represented from the manger to the cross, occupied a conspicuous place, while martyrs and saints blended with the pomp of ancestry and the magnificence of mythological scenes and warlike action.

The Marchioness, although a woman of natural vivacity, was possessed of a deeply religious spirit. The poor and the miserable found in her a friend. Skilled in embroidery and in all the intricacies of the loom, she scorned not to make garments for the needy, and with her own hands to minister to the necessities of the sick and the distressed. To find time for demands of this nature she not unfrequently excused herself from participating in the lighter amusements of her guests.

One morning a large party set out from the castle for the purpose of driving a herd of wild cattle from the recesses of the forest. The Marchioness excused herself, pleading her charitable employment as her reason; the Countess

begged to assist her, and Lady Aurelia pleaded illness, as she did not care for a hunt of this nature. Devoted as these ladies were to the church, the conversation at length turned upon the sad effects of dissension among those who profess to honor God's law and to abide by the principles inculcated in his word. Expressions dropped by the Countess were repeated, and the Marchioness made bold to say that some of their own people had adopted the Vaudois faith.

Lady Aurelia was restless and uneasy. She could not deny that since the day Marcel made bold to speak before Roderi she had longed to know more. Greatly as she loved the Marchioness, she could not bring herself to question the Countess in her presence. It was a time when suspicion must not be aroused, and still she could not put the wish aside. Looking up, she caught the eyes of the Marchioness.

"It is true you are not well; we must call a leech," said the latter, crossing the room and laying her hand upon the white temples of the young lady.

"Not ill," replied Lady Aurelia; "a walk in

the air will revive me;" and a smile played around the dimpled mouth.

"Teresa will accompany you, and do not go too far," was said tenderly.

Teresa dropped her embroidery, and, flinging a light scarf about her white shoulders, followed Lady Aurelia across the marble pavement and through an open porch with carved columns and tessellated floor. Festoons of flowering vines and sweet-scented shrubs gave color and beauty, and the play of the fountain filled the air with delicious coolness. Children played on the terrace, and white-armed girls were busy at their looms.

Lady Aurelia did not pause on the terrace; she wished rest and quiet more than quick jest and merry laughter, and she stopped only at some distance from the castle, at the edge of the forest. Teresa too was silent, perhaps longing for something that she had not. The orange-blossoms on the trees were mingled with abundance of ripening fruit. The sight of what would soon prove a harvest of golden fruit awoke a thought in the mind of the youthful Lady Aurelia. Childhood had passed,

youth was fleeing away, age was at hand,—what then? It was a strange thought to trouble her. She trembled. Everything around her was suggestive. It was like the sudden awakening to a new life; the springs of being were quickened; avenues of thought opened. To whom could she go, where could she turn for wisdom, to unravel the mystery?

"It is a new thing to see Lady Aurelia sad; if it please thee I will bring a lute," said Teresa in a silvery voice.

"Hast thou ever known what it is to desire something that cannot be found — something that comes so near as to be almost tangible, and still, when we reach out our hands, it is not there? The air is full of it—the flowers, the groves, the singing birds, the voices of happy children—but in the heart it is only a dreary longing for something not to be found."

There was a plaintive, pleading tone in the voice, an almost sob, while the silken-fringed eyelids shut in the tears.

Teresa took a step nearer, and raising her dark eyes said tenderly,

"This want of something we have not, this

Montalto.

Page 67.

reaching outward and upward, is but the cry of the homesick soul after God."

"God present in the world of nature, and not in us, the work of his hands?" gasped Lady Aurelia.

"True. He is our Creator, his breath is our life, his care is over us, but his love is not forced upon us; our souls may be dark and cold and friendless. He will not come to us, save as we ask him. He will abide with us only so long as we please to give him welcome."

"Whence comes this wisdom? Where is this knowledge of God to be found?" asked Lady Aurelia.

"In the sacred books," replied Teresa.

"Dost read these for thyself?"

"I did not at first, but, thanks to a Vaudois maiden who sometimes comes to the castle, I have myself a copy."

"Wilt fear to share it with me?"

"Thou knowest these are perilous times. But if in truth thou art feeling after God, I cannot deny thee."

Opening the folds of her mantle, Teresa drew forth a small roll and handed it to Lady Aurelia.

There was a visible tremor of the lady's white hand, and the words, as she read, came slow and faltering:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.—But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.—Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.—Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.—Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

The roll fell from her hands and an expression of awe settled over the handsome face: "If I but dared draw near to God! No, there must be some mistake. How shall a sinful woman approach her Maker?"

"Through his Son, our Mediator," spoke Teresa. "Permit me to read:

"'Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an high priest,

who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmities; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.'"

The firmly-shut lips relaxed, the awed expression of the face softened; there was a rift in the cloud and a faint ray shot into the darkened heart. Henceforth Lady Aurelia would never feel as she had felt; the one atonement was the antidote; the one High Priest was all-sufficient; there were no barriers; she could go to him.

Teresa saw the first faint glimmering of a new life. Full of joy, as one who looks upon

the rosy flush of coming day, she could hardly help crying out.

"We shall be missed," exclaimed Lady Aurelia, rising. "If it please thee, to-morrow at this hour I will hear more."

The music of the fountain as it fell into the marble basin was the only sound that met them as they reached the forest boundary. Lady Aurelia was silent.

"I hear the voice of the Marchioness," said Teresa, turning into a winding walk.

Scarcely were the words uttered when a loud noise in the courtyard gave them to understand that the hunt was over. Reining in their steeds, the returning ladies rode demurely behind a small herd of dun cattle, each with a long, leathern thong about the horns and fastened by one end to a saddle-bow. There was a look of weariness that tamed the savage ferocity of their spirits.

"Poor brutes!" exclaimed the Marchioness. "Only give man the power, and he will use it. Torn away from your old haunts, it is to be hoped your conqueror will not prove a tyrant."

The Countess waved her hand and smiled down upon her children from the gallery above. Lady Aurelia was attracted by a new face. She turned with a questioning look to Teresa.

"It is the Vaudois maiden of whom I spoke —Christina; and the youth beside her is her brother Marquet."

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTINA AND RODERI THE CURÉ.

CHRISTINA had several times been to the castle, so that there was no trepidation as the Marchioness presented her to Lady Aurelia. Marquet was deeply embarrassed. The Marquis had the rare tact, however, of putting people at their ease.

"We have had a delightful morning, and not the least pleasant feature is the fact that our young friends are to spend several days with us. We must see still more of the forest. I hardly knew myself it was so vast and fascinating," he said to the Marchioness.

"Come nearer and look at the herd, dear mother;" and Marcel led the Countess forward. "It was well worth a hard run to see them in their wildness."

Pliant with exercise, the mottled sides of the captives shone like satin; their large, lustrous

eyes rolled with a subdued fierceness that gave but a faint impression of the struggle in which they were overcome.

At dinner the Marchioness placed Marquet at her left hand. Christina sat between the Countess and Lady Aurelia. Lively sallies abounded and wit sparkled and flashed incessantly. Christina had a sweetly-expressive face, with eyes like living wells of truth and purity. She had likewise the charm of being a good listener, and before they left the table Roderi was as well pleased with the stranger as was Lady Aurelia.

According to custom, the guests occupied themselves as their tastes dictated. Surrounded by novelty, Isera and Christina moved up the marble stairs and through long corridors, breathing cool, delicious freshness. In a massive, showy frame was the pictured face of a young Roman lady; the inexpressible sadness in her clear blue eyes won Christina to examine a parchment that hung beside it in a glass case. In this she learned that the lady suffered death rather than deny her faith.

"Had you lived in that age would you have

followed the example of the good Theodora? Could you die for your religion, Isera?" was questioned.

"I trust those days have passed," was the evasive reply.

"But if they have not, could you suffer for the truth?" persisted Christina.

"I am afraid not. But why do you ask such a question? Do you think such a test will be required of me?" with a startled look on the young, bright face.

"I did not mean to distress you, dear Isera," Christina hastened to say. "It is a question I frequently ask myself: Should I have the courage?"

"But why torture yourself with such a possibility? I have heard my father say that it is the privilege of every one to think for himself; the darkness of superstition is rolling up, as night opens to the day. Think how many have already imbibed your own faith."

Isera was standing with her rosy face closely pressed to Christina's shoulder.

"Your father is a rare man and a wise ruler, Isera. That there are many who have imbibed

our faith I allow, and this it is that leads me to question while I think of it."

"Then we will not think of it," raising her head quickly. And Isera drew her friend to the opposite side of the gallery. "Here is the noble Florentine whose poems you so much admired, and over whose sad history we both wept," she said with a view to diversion.

"Dante?" asked Christina.

"Yes; and I have to own to weakness here. I never look at his face and think of his story without tears."

"Had he suffered less he might not have written so sweetly," returned Christina.

"Like nightingales with their eyes put out to improve their singing," said Isera with all of her old vivacity.

On every hand faces of bewildering loveliness, with a long line of princely ancestry, rising out of twilight drapery, looked down from out the frames.

"Here is a picture of the Mother and Child. I am told they are very fine," said Isera.

Christina was standing before it when Roderi entered.

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"This is by Giotto; no wonder you admire it," he said pleasantly.

"I know but little of painting; I was thinking more of the Child," stammered Christina.

"But you honor Mary?"

"Honored of women, still she was but a mortal," was answered modestly.

"Who so fitting to act as our intercessor? She is free to enter his presence; she is never repulsed," continued the priest.

"This privilege is granted to each one of us. The invitation is free—'Come!'" returned Christina with a startled look.

"Would it not be presumption in us to approach him?" asked the priest,

"When he is so gracious as cordially to invite us? No."

"We do not rush into the presence of our superiors," returned Roderi in a smooth voice. "When we are invited we are always under the necessity of being presented."

Christina hesitated, and at length remarked: "In our fallen estate he looked upon us in compassion. Love brought him down from heaven; love nailed him to the cross. It is the

same love that invites us to come. Would it not be presumption to stay away, setting up a will of our own rather than yielding a quick obedience to the loving-kindness that bids us come?"

"We must venerate as well as love, daughter," returned the priest.

As they approached the chapel Christina was surprised to find its altar blazing with lighted tapers and clouds of incense rolling off into the nave and transepts.

"It is the hour for worship," said Roderi, seeing her look of surprise. "I was on my way to invite you when we met in the gallery. There is nothing in our service that as a Christian you can disapprove?"

"Certainly not," was the quick response.

Christina was accustomed to chapel-service at Montalto, but that was plain and simple in comparison. Chorus-singers chanted a portion of the Psalms, at the close of which a taper was extinguished, then another and another. It was an imposing ceremonial, with priestly robes and bells and exquisite music. The ladies of the household were extremely devout. Christina

endeavored to say her prayers just as she was in the habit of doing at home. Try as she would, however, her thoughts wandered to the splendid ritual, which she saw in all its magnificence for the first time.

"I am rejoiced to see that you get on so well with the curé," Lady Aurelia said as they left the chapel.

"It would ill become a guest not to join in the religious exercises of the house," Christina answered.

"Compared with your own rites, how did these strike you?" asked Lady Aurelia.

There was a sudden surprised look and a quivering of the lips. Was this a question to entrap her? Before coming to the castle her parents had enjoined it upon her to be prudent in speech. "To be firm in the faith is very different from stirring up strife and provoking discussion," her father said. Her eyes filled with tears; she hardly knew how to answer.

"Do not distrust me," said Lady Aurelia, seeing the state she was in. "I have an honest desire to learn the truth. Teresa tells me that she is permitted to read with you for an hour at

night. Will you not allow me the same privilege?"

"I know very little; I am not wise. If you would learn, you should see my father or the barba," raising her timid eyes and feeling reassured from the earnest, pleading manner of the lady.

"But you can help me, as you have helped Teresa," pleaded Lady Aurelia.

"If it is your wish," said Christina with more boldness. "Teresa will lead you through the winding gallery."

The days were filled with wrestling-matches, foot-races, and chariot-driving, the competitors straining every nerve to win—the victors, modest and unassuming, receiving the plaudits of the crowd as well as the prize with a dignified unconcern, as charming to behold as the contest had been warm and nobly contested. In the foot-races Marquet won, receiving from the hands of the Marchioness a golden grasshopper of curious workmanship. On the last day there was a tournament that embraced several families of the nobility. Pavilions were raised for spectators, and refreshments were prepared. On

the front seat of each pavilion the ladies took their places, each dressed according to her rank, and wearing in her head-dress the gift she intended to bestow on her knight.

The sound of the trumpet announced the approach of the knights, five on a side, the first five habited in blue and gold cloth, and mounted on black horses in similar colors; esquires on foot followed, with a herald in his robe. These made the circuit of the square, saluting the ladies, then ranging themselves in line. With a flourish of his trumpet the herald proclaimed the challenge according to the laws of chivalry. At the third repetition of the challenge the sound of a second trumpet announced another herald, dressed in black and scarlet. The two heralds held a parley; then the black herald turned and proclaimed his defiance in the name of the knights in black and scarlet. The five black knights immediately entered, saluted the ladies, and then drew up, fronting the knights in blue and gold. The chief of the latter threw down his gauntlet; the chief of the black knights directed his esquire to take it up. Then the knights received their

lances, hung their shields on their left arms, and, making a general salute, turned round to make their charges, meeting in full gallop and shivering their spears in the onset. In the second and third encounter they discharged their pistols. In the fourth they fought with their swords. After this they returned to the banqueting-hall, and the castle rung with the sounds of merriment.

Accustomed to a more quiet life, Countess Montalto retired early. Isera was already asleep, and Christina sat at the window looking out into the night. She had been an inmate of the castle but a few days; still, it seemed long, so many novelties had passed before her. It was a world of enchantment in which she had borne a part. What effect had this upon her spiritual life? A cloud crossed the moon, and the night breeze played in the meshes of her dark hair. For an instant it seemed the loving touch of her father's hand; the murmured blessing sounded in her ears. Unconsciously her head drooped. She felt that she had drifted away, her heart filled with the present and no longer hungering after the

higher life. And Marquet? What effect will it have upon him? Will it make him ambitious? Received on terms of equality with those above him in rank and riches, will it render him dissatisfied with his simple home and quiet life?

Inclined to be severe with herself, Christina did not count the hour she had spent with Teresa at the close of each day. She did not take into consideration that Lady Aurelia had begged the privilege of reading with her and thus learning more of God's word. She only thought of the danger, the temptation to forget, surrounded as she was by so much calculated to lead astray. A wave of light flashed across the gloom, and a rippling peal of laughter echoed along the gallery and was gone. Over again, in her own home, will she miss the gay throng? will she long for the ease and luxury of a life to which she has hitherto been a stranger?

A slight rustle and the raising of the silken curtain caused Christina to look up. Lady Aurelia stood before her clad in a loose white robe, her long hair unbraided, and her eyes filled with an expression anxious but still tender.

"Is it too late? Do I intrude? I could not get away earlier," came pleadingly.

"No intrusion, dear lady. Teresa has been here; she thought perhaps you could not come to-night."

"Had there been promise of another, I might not. We shall miss you, Christina."

"That you may sometimes think of me I am to leave with you the book in which we shall read together," answered Christina.

"You could not please me better. To understand it, you say, I have only to ask the Spirit's aid?"

For answer Christina turned to the table and opened the sacred pages:

"The more we study it, the more it grows upon us, becoming our life, the very air we breathe. Other books are worthy to be read, but the flavor once extracted there is nothing more; whereas God's word is always revealing something new — like a garden of spices, growing sweeter and sweeter the farther we penetrate."

"I tremble when I consider how little I know of it, how long I have lived without it, and now,

the need of secrecy in reading it," said Lady Aurelia humbly.

"I trust the time will come when there will be no necessity of shutting it in with bolts and bars," Christina said, and then began to read:

"'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Christina closed the book. Lady Aurelia spoke slowly:

"It is this faith that inspires the martyrs, is it not? Buoyed up by the hope of union

with Christ, it would not be a hard thing to die."

"If the day comes when our enemies are the strongest, this may be required of us." A death-like pallor overspread Christina's face. "We see others called upon to endure. Should it come to us, shall we be able?"

"Do not think of anything so very dreadful," exclaimed Lady Aurelia. "If we are children and heirs, then surely we are entitled to his protection."

"If the flock had not been scattered, the light of his truth would never have been carried from sea to sea. Every drop of blood spilled will garner a harvest of souls for Christ."

Christina spoke with emotion. Already she seemed to divine that if not herself called upon to suffer, it would be for some whom she loved to pass through the fiery gate.

It was late; the inmates of the castle were asleep. Lady Aurelia drew herself up to her full height:

"It does not seem difficult to understand why the apostolic church of Italy sought a retreat in

the wilderness, in order to preserve her purity. I feel that I am a Catholic, and I am not sure but I am a Vaudois."

"God grant it, in faith and practice!" returned Christina.

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL ALEXANDRINI.

ON the day of the tournament at the Castle of Spinello a stranger was threading his way through the streets of Rome—a stranger, for his dress was different from that of others, and still he seemed to be at home in the streets, turning the corners so as to avoid the lazzaroni, occasionally stopping to look at the steeples, as if to take his bearings, and then rushing forward, neither speaking to nor recognizing friend or acquaintance. At length he came to the palace of the Cardinal Alexandrini. A shade of disappointment crossed his face and his step halted. A crowd of carriages stood before the door, and on every hand there was evidence that it was a reception-day. A moment the stranger surveyed the scene; then with a sudden resolute will in his face he mounted the steps that led up to the sumptuous abode.

A vigilant servant met him at the threshold: "What will you have, signor?"

"I would see Cardinal Alexandrini," was said in a firm tone.

"That is impossible at this hour; His Eminence is particularly engaged;" and with a low bow the servant turned aside.

"Stay!" exclaimed the stranger with the air of one accustomed to command. "I must see the Cardinal; he expects me at whatever hour I arrive;" and, drawing a card from his pocket, he traced a cipher and handed it to the astonished official. As the man disappeared the visitor gazed with an easy, nonchalant air upon the magnificent marble and bronze and gold, exhibiting tokens of expenditure more like the extravagance of kings than the house of a prelate giving to the church the example of his life as well as the moulding influence of his words.

The servant returned, and this time with an obsequious bow and a voice deferential to the last degree:

"This way, signor," leading the stranger up the grand staircase and through a suite of apartments, each one richer than the last, and

ushering him at length into what seemed to be a private cabinet, and at the moment without an occupant. Farther on voices were heard, and after an interval of patient waiting, without noise and without the sensible opening of a door, a tall, well-built man entered.

"Your visit is opportune, notwithstanding the hour. I have been anxious to hear from you," said the Cardinal, without prelude or salutation.

"I could not send word, and so was obliged to come myself. It is a long journey and time is pressing," returned the stranger.

"You have seen the Viceroy?"

"I have seen him."

"What does he say?"

"He is ready to bring them into subjection or to exterminate them, as you deem best."

"It becomes the church to be merciful. It seems that this people are noted for industry. They make good citizens, but bad churchmen. You say the lands are greatly enriched by them, the tithes into the treasury of our Lord are greatly increased."

"This is all true, but as their wealth and

their power increase their heresy is spread abroad. Even now many of our noble families are tainted with it; our youth are biassed, and many of them, I fear, led away."

"Do you mean to say that the nobility receive them and associate with them on terms of equality?"

"Hardly that. Still, the chief families come and go freely. They have schools, and I must say they are well taught. If these things are not checked, it will not be long until they have settled pastors."

"This is a sad picture, and calls for reform; but 'extermination' is too strong a word. We must try every other plan," replied the Cardinal.

"But if they will not yield?" and the steel-bright eyes were fastened on the prelate's face.

"If they will not yield, we must see," returned the prelate with a countenance in which the most wary would fail to read a thought. After a pause he added: "You spoke of Count Montalto as favoring them. Is it on account of their religion, or because his lands are rendered more valuable?"

"I have every reason to believe that it is from principle. Every movement would indicate that he is one with them in faith; and his children also; the eldest son especially is a secret but firm believer in their creed."

"Has this youth ability?" questioned the Cardinal.

"More than ordinary, with a knowledge of books seldom seen in one of his age."

"Suppose we call him to Rome?"

"How is that?" was asked eagerly.

"He would naturally come here to finish his studies," said the Cardinal.

"I have thought of this," returned the stranger.

"The Count is an old friend of mine," said the Cardinal. "If we can manage to withdraw him from his estates— You say there is no one else who so greatly favors this people?"

"The Marquis Spinello is favorably inclined, but, I judge, from a different motive. Appoint him a course to pursue, and I feel very sure that he will carry it out faithfully," replied the visitor.

"For the present it may be wise to allow things to remain as they are. Stern measures must not be thought of until mild ones have

failed. I am gratified to learn that the church has a son as faithful as you have proved yourself to be, faithful as you will still prove. For the present go back to your work and to your tutorship. Exert a wholesome influence over the Count—exhort him, and, if need be, warn him, but in no instance threaten. Stir up his self-love; if you can, awaken his ambition. In the mean time suggest that his son has the talent and the ability to do well—that Rome, as the great centre, is the place for him. In this way we can awaken their ambition, and perhaps save them to the church."

"And the Viceroy? what shall I say to him?"

"He must wait. To watch is the main thing now. As a church we have had so much to contend with. We do not love bloodshed; it is forced upon us, and then we are reproached with it. I would save the souls of this people, but I would, if possible, do it without violence."

The audience was at an end. The Cardinal placed his hand on the bared head of his visitor:

"Be vigilant, but gentle. The church knows how to reward the faithful. You are weary and

need refreshment. Take this to Benedetti," placing a card in the hand of his visitor. "For me, I neither sleep nor take refreshment; the church and her interests demand all my time."

CHAPTER XI.

ANDREA'S FOREBODINGS.

THE west wind came in from the sea, and the clouds, like white banks of snow, gleamed in the distance. Christina had been to the vineyard, and was returning with her little brother Antoine, bearing in their hands rich clusters of purple grapes. There was nothing singular in this. Often had Christina and Antoine been down the same path, stopping to chirrup to the birds, to gather dwarf-roses or a pretty specimen of fern with which to make bracelets or to twine the brown hair massed profusely over head, neck, and shoulders. Nothing singular, and still Antoine's black eyes flashed and sparkled as he walked by the side of Christina, seeing nothing but the slight figure, the broad, full brow, and dimpled cheeks through which the red blood raced and quick feeling flushed

and paled in the features, as one sees the fire-light flit through clear windows.

Christina had been away so long! A week was a long time to Antoine; and then she had been to a castle, and so much she had already told and so much remained to tell. Of course, while Antoine and his mother remained at home Christina and Marquet had lived in a marvellous world of pictures and fountains and winding galleries, with rides and walks and gay dresses, and last a chase through the forest for dun-colored cattle. Antoine's eyes flash; he wishes that he had been there; but then he would not like to have seen the poor cattle with ropes about their horns, and afterward made to draw heavy burdens. And the tournament! He had all his life read of such things, but he had never been so near one. Marquet had actually been in it; the golden grasshopper attested this. It was a marvel of beauty, with two glittering diamond eyes. He had taken it in his hand, and knew it was real; and, without meaning it, Antoine wishes that he had been there. He wonders if the Marquis will give him an invitation when he he is older. Of course he will go to Montalto.

He already knows Marcel and Victor, and, looking into his sister's rosy face, he questions of the prize Marcel won, and if he is soon to come to St. Xisto.

"What leads you to think that he will come to St. Xisto?" the blushes coming and going on her fair cheek.

"I am sure he likes to come. Do you not like to see him?" A little wondering look on the boy's face.

"True, I like to see him, for I know when he comes to St. Xisto that he is honest in his search after truth."

"I thought he came to seek you," was the reply, without the shadow of a smile on the young face.

"We must hasten or we shall be too late," Christina replied, at the same time shading her eyes with her hand and looking at the sun. "You know father always comes at sunset."

"Marquet is to finish my bow to-night, and when I am older and invited to the castle I shall take a prize; I mean to try for it."

There was no reply. Antoine's words had cut across Christina's thoughts. She could not

deny that her visit had been pleasant—a world of beauty, and everybody as kind as though she had known them for years. She did not hide it from herself that it was a joy to meet Marcel and Isera on terms of equality. Marcel was superior to any one whom she had known, and he was one to seek the truth and to vindicate it. Was it as Antoine said? Did he come to St. Xisto because she was there? Her heart thrilled with a new hope, and the next instant blushes suffused her cheeks, and she condemned herself for such a thought. Henceforth she must fly the temptation to see him. Marcel was of the nobility—she but a simple Vaudois maiden, anxious, most of all, as she thought, to do good. Had she been selfish in this, thinking more of the friendship of one so far above her than she did of his soul's welfare? All the time had she deluded herself with the thought "it was for the truth's sake"?

The sun was set when they reached home. Christina stopped just long enough to give her father the accustomed kiss, then hastened to her room. Why should she feel so keenly what Antoine had said? When Marcel came to

St. Xisto she always expected to see him. It was pleasant in every sense, he was so much her superior; she had never attempted to analyze her feelings. Now she sees that selfishness has crept in; she is conscious that a word from him has more weight with her than whole sentences from any other. The quick delicacy of her nature is aroused. With confusion she remembers one day at the castle when she felt her cheeks kindle under his eye, his words thrilling her with a sweet sense of joy. Bowing her head, tears fell silently. All this time she had nourished her own thoughts, her own feelings, drinking in the sweetness of a new atmosphere, when outwardly she had called it a search after the way of life.

In her humiliation Christina forgot that God had given her a heart full of that sweet charity that delights in companionship; neither would he hold her guilty of wrong-doing because she enjoyed social intercourse with some above others.

Since Christina's return from the castle Antoine had not permitted her to remain long alone. Now, with a little noisy clamor at the

door, he came to lead her down to where the family were gathered under the flowering vines. Marquet was still at work on the bow, tightening the string and adjusting the arrow; then a shrill twang, and the arrow shot into the air and came down without mischief.

"It will make my arms strong, will it not?" and the child tugged at the cord to pull it into place. "I must learn to leap and run." Pressing nearer to Marquet, he drew down the clear young face and whispered, "I want to do something better than anybody else. I mean to go to the castle when I am bigger, and I shall not be a bit satisfied if I do not get a grasshopper with diamond eyes."

With his hands clasped behind his back Andrea walked up and down the flagstones; his head was bent forward and his step faltered, like that of one in trouble.

"Something new to distress you, father?" asked Marquet as he left the bow with Antoine. "Is it true that the people are dissatisfied and want a pastor?"

"It is so, my son, and, much as my heart opposes, it is their privilege if they desire it."

"You have stated to them on what grounds you disapprove it?" Marquet asked, laying his hand fondly on his father's arm.

"I have used the little eloquence I have to no avail," was the reply.

"Our barbas have had to work in secret, and our missionaries have been roughly handled; all this shows a spirit of antagonism not likely to grow less," replied Marquet with a penetration beyond his years.

"Did the Countess or Marcel speak of this?" asked Andrea, stopping in his walk and looking into his son's face with indescribable sadness.

"Marcel did not express himself, yet still I am conscious that he fears. Risaldo's movements are perplexing, and Roderi shows the same spirit."

"I hope you were prudent, my boy; you did not make too much of yourself?"

"Oh, father, how could I?"

There was so much real humility in the voice that it touched the father's heart, and he was sorry he had spoken in that fashion.

"What do the people propose?" asked the good wife, coming through the vine-clad door.

"They say Barba Gilles is an old man, too old to make long journeys, and when a younger man comes he will be a stranger. The people in the Piedmontese valleys have erected places of worship, instead of meeting, as they formerly did, in private houses. They say we can do as much."

"Surely it is not a time to push things. Will they not hear to thee? We must be strong before we can run such a risk," said the wife, coming near her husband as she spoke.

"I was told Barba Gilles would never come again. Barba Negrin of Bobi is the one," interrupted Marquet.

"It makes little difference. If the people will have a pastor, one man must not stay them," said Andrea. "If we would succeed, they say, we must have the appearance of being strong. With danger around us, there must be no show of faint-heartedness."

"Be not cast down," said the good wife, laying her hand on Andrea's arm. "If this thing is to be, God permits it, and can he not care for his own?"

"Confidence in God does not free us from the

necessity of a wise forethought with regard to work entrusted to us to do. There is no good to be gained in stirring up our enemies," answered Andrea.

Christina had laid the table, and Antoine had filled the pitcher from the spring.

"It is a question we must not try to settle," said the wife. "As our fathers were led from the valleys to establish themselves here and to plant a church, God will not forsake it, neither will he suffer it to be cut down save for its future good and prosperity."

Christina was standing in the door; the moonbeams, sifting through the vines, revealed a sweet content resting on the face lately so disturbed and anxious.

"It has been a long day, father; you are tired and hungry," she said, coming down the step and leaning her brown head against his shoulder.

"Not much, but it is late and we will have supper; after that I must prepare for my journey."

"To Geneva? How I would like to go with you, father!"

"It is a long way, child, and, try as I will, I cannot think that it will be for our good."

"If against your convictions, father, have you not the right to refuse?" pleaded Christina.

"My own personal feeling must not be allowed to weigh against the voice of the majority. Pray for me, dear child, that God will be with me by the way."

"We will think of you every day and hour, dear father, and both at home and abroad God will have us in his most holy keeping."

CHAPTER XII.

BARBA GILLES IN VENICE.

IN a long room, arched above, with fluted columns, and fragrant with the breath of perfumed flowers, a lady past the meridian of life reclined on purple cushions, while another, in the bloom of youth and loveliness, sat at the loom, slipping her shuttle through the colored loops, half listless and half sad. Still, the day was bright, and not a fairer scene did the sun look down upon; for all that wealth could buy or art devise was gathered in that palace by the sea. At length the elder lady said,

"You do wrong, Aurelia, to dwell so much upon a rumor. If the Cardinal has seen fit to use his power, it is no doubt to exert a wholesome influence. I cannot think the church will carry her exactions so far as to punish with death a defenceless people. How did you learn it, child?"

"It comes from Francesca Sparviera, and reaches us, no doubt, in a mild form. Oh, mother, I am sick at heart when I think of these poor Christians!"

"You cannot help them, child."

"Could not my father lend his influence?"

"Against the church?" was asked.

"If but a portion of the church rise up and say it is an outrage, it may cause those who are in power to stop and question if there is sufficient ground for such stern measures."

"Of what are these people accused?" and the mother sat erect and looked into the pale, earnest face of her daughter.

"Of heresy, mother dear."

"The church claims them?"

"It would seem so, but in my opinion it is not the Vaudois who have departed from the faith, but the church, with her ritual and ordinances, has set up a standard not authorized in the Scriptures."

"My dear child, do you not perceive that this is dangerous ground? You were baptized into the church; are you not a member of it? Should you interfere, or should you influence

your father to ask for mercy, would it not be virtually to condemn yourself? Would it not call down wrath and indignation upon your family?"

"But if our church is in error cannot we abjure those errors?"

"The Vaudois claim this privilege."

"And for this they are put to death. I perceive the purpose of your questioning, and for this reason you said that I could not help them."

"True, and still I cannot think that the church will carry the matter further. What stirred her to this work? and where didst thou learn so much of these humble Christians?"

"The little that I know was learned and my interest awakened during my late visit to Calabria."

"Calabria! It is not possible the persecutions are there?"

"Rumor says that death for their faith is not unfrequent," was the reply.

"But our friends are safe; the anathemas do not reach them?" asked the lady, her countenance showing real alarm.

"Are you thinking of the Marquis Spinello?"

"Of whom else should I think?" exclaimed the lady.

"I have told you of Christina and Marquet, and the visit I made to the towns of St. Xisto and La Guardia. Up to that time I had taken it for granted that heretics and the children of heretics were ill-favored and hideous. What was my surprise to find a people singularly lovely in appearance, refined in manner, and learned in the sciences as well as in polite literature, speaking in Latin, in the Romance language, and in Italian! I confess that I was interested and pleased, and when I examined their faith it was evident that *we* had departed, and that as a people they alone held the gospel as taught by the apostles."

"Alas, my child! you shall find that we have fallen upon dark times if the bishop should learn this; for if these are heretics of whom you speak, it is clear that you are not far from being one yourself."

"I have desired to tell you this, dear mother."

"Have you said aught of this to another, my child?" and the mother's eyes filled with tears.

"Do the people suspect that you are no longer true to the church?"

"So far as the church is true to herself I am true to her. Do not think that I abjure the faith."

"What you call it will make but little difference, provided it gets abroad," was said feelingly.

"The good Filostrato is the only one in all Venice with whom I have conversed, and rather would he lose his life than betray one who confides in him."

"Alas! what will your father say? I tremble when I think of it."

"Have we not a right to worship as we please?"

"Beware, my child! such freedom may be your ruin?"

"But, mother, with the cries of these innocent people in my ears, how can I keep silence? My father has power; he can protect them;" and she rose and walked rapidly across the apartment. "Is it wrong to defend the helpless?"

"Not wrong, but ill-advised, to attempt what

we are powerless to execute. Patiently to suffer what God permits pleases him more than the things of our own choice."

A light, silvery laugh was heard, and a white-armed maiden slid through the satin curtains and bowed gracefully to the elder of the two ladies:

"Has your ladyship forgotten that this is the evening we go to St. Mark's? The people are crowding there already."

"Pardon, dear mother; I was not aware of the hour. You and Violette will go without me," said Lady Aurelia.

"How is this?" exclaimed Violette. "In all Venice, I suppose no one would more enjoy the services than Aurelia."

"I am ill, Violette. My heart is heavy as some leaden thing. Nay, Violette, go without me.—Persuade her, dear mother."

"My child, you *are* ill; your head is hot and your eyes heavy. Sylvia knows many ways to wile away distempers.—Here, Sylvia!" touching with her taper fingers a silver bell; "Aurelia is ill; give her a soothing draught, and bathe her head, as you did mine at Whitsuntide, and sing

to her; methinks I have not heard you sing so sweetly since." Then turning to Aurelia: "God bless thee, child.—Now, Violette, let us go."

Moonlight silvered the waters of the Adriatic Sea as a gondola swept out of the shadow of Landino Palace. In the stern sat a lady pale and silent while the oars cut the waves without a ripple. At length the lady spoke:

"Are you sure of the way, Jacopo?"

"Antonio said that I should shun the crowd that makes the lagoon one great carnival. Does it seem lonely, lady?"

"I was thinking if we should be too late."

"It is not certain that he comes to-night. An aged man, the journey is full long; besides—"

"Besides what, Jacopo?"

"If anything should befall him, lady!"

"True; these are troublous times. I trust the barba will be spared;" and Lady Aurelia looked back to the city sitting by the sea.

"You have listened to the rumor, lady?"

"Yes, Jacopo; my heart aches for these Christians."

"All this must be taken into account. But there is Antonio's signal; we must ply our oars."

Far away lights were shining, and the gay music of a crowd of revellers struck their ears. Gliding into the shadow, the gondola made its way swiftly. Antonio was near.

"Have no misgivings; all is well," was whispered tenderly.

"It is not often that I fear, but I cannot bear to live and act by stealth. I would do openly what I do, and brave the issue," said Lady Aurelia.

"And thus lose all. Jacopo knows this is not the way to gain the greatest good," returned Antonio, at the same time offering his arm to Aurelia. "There is not the least danger of our being recognized. Come!"

With a word to Jacopo, Lady Aurelia took the arm of Antonio, and, drawing her mantle over her face, walked away in the direction of the small room where she had before met Barba Gilles. As they reached the dwelling they perceived a crowd in the yard, and, uncertain whether friends or spies, they halted and then

turned away. Forthwith a young woman detached herself from the group and came after them:

"If it was your intent to enter, do not hesitate, seeing we are friends."

At these words both Lady Aurelia and Antonio took courage, returning at once and joining the worshippers.

When the services ended Aurelia pressed close to the barba and asked after the church in Calabria, and if the persecutions in Provence would be likely to affect it.

"There is much reason to fear that Rome will not be satisfied to leave them in peace. Thus far, they have lived without visible organization, enriching Rome without stirring her pride or exciting her ambition. They are now rearing houses of worship and asking for a stated pastorate. This, Rome may look upon as a provocation, and in this way the fires of martyrdom may be kindled in Calabria as well as in the northern mountains. Our hope is in God. We must seek him and trust him and labor for him. Have you well examined the question? It is a serious thing to follow Christ

in these days. Are you ready to live for him? are you ready to die for him?"

The tone was so solemn, and the reverend figure and face of the barba so full of tenderness, that Lady Aurelia in vain tried to answer. Her lips moved, but the words were not audible.

"Pardon if my question seemed abrupt, but this is no time for deception. It is not enough that our sympathies are enlisted; in giving we must give all, knowing, realizing, that at any moment we may be called upon to yield our life or our faith. To the Christian, eternal life is the boon that Christ has promised to those who overcome, to those who are firm and undaunted, holding fast to their crown," continued Barba Gilles.

"I have taken the Bible to be my guide," came through Lady Aurelia's white lips. "If the church makes a dividing-line, I shall abide by the gospel in the simplicity with which it was first preached."

Winding his mantle about his face, the barba was silent. Then raising his head proudly he laid his hands on the bowed heads of Aurelia and Antonio.

"All power is of God," he said. "If we suffer with Christ, we shall likewise reign with Christ. In whatever strait, his presence will light us through, his arm will be our strength, his bosom our shield. Of little consequence are rank and fame and treasure compared to the inheritance in reserve for those who, in love and honor, keep God's commandments. 'Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that thou hast;' 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.'"

Thus comforted and strengthened in the Lord, Aurelia, with Antonio and Jacopo, returned to the city.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAPAL DISPLAY AT MONTALTO.

THE Fête Dieu, one of the festivals in the Papal Church, was to take place with more than its accustomed splendor. Risaldo did not see why there could not be a magnificent procession; the effect would be elevating, and then it would be an effectual way for the sons and daughters of the church to show their high appreciation of the ritual. He would write and ask Cardinal Alexandrini to lend his presence to the occasion. This would be a grand opportunity for the Cardinal to visit Calabria, as he had often expressed a desire to do.

Lady Portia Giulia Polenta was visiting the Castle of Montalto. Lady Portia was an ardent devotee, a firm upholder of the Romish faith, the heiress of large estates, and followed by a crowd of admirers, among whom were found princes, who thought it not beneath them to

sue for her hand. From all of these she was said to have turned away with pious grace, resigning her possessions and giving her heart and her hand to the church. Lady Portia was educated at the convent of St. Stefano dell' Uliva at Ravenna, and to this convent she was desirous to return, herself to become a nun.

In carrying out the policy of Cardinal Alexandrini, Risaldo could not have chosen a more able ally than Lady Portia. She was not only zealous for the church, but she was a beautiful woman, with eyes of loving tenderness and a voice of such bewitching sweetness that it was difficult to resist her eloquence. Winning the heart of the Countess, she soon possessed herself of the key to each inner chamber, poisoning the breath and leaving the trail of her serpent course wherever she went. Using her arts, she questioned the Countess with such seeming display of sympathy and tenderness, that in a moment of weakness the poor woman told of the terrible struggle she had passed through in the attempt to reconcile the practices of the church with the teaching of the word of God. To this, Lady Portia answered with all sweet-

ness. For herself she could not uphold severe measures. But the church was in part excusable. It had so much to contend with, and if it did at times seem stern and unrelenting, it was due to the excess of its love, its devotion, and its desire to maintain the faith. It was striving to do what it could, and in the best way it could, to save souls that outside its pale must be for ever lost.

Not only did this deceptive woman insinuate herself into the good graces of the Countess, but she used every possible means to gauge the depth of devotional feeling in the heart of Count Montalto, holding up before him the necessity for each and every son of the church to prove himself faithful, eager to spread the truth, as well as to restrain those whom the adversary was leading into schisms and heresies inimical to all good. Last, but not least, she patronized the students, presuming, with inimitable sweetness of manner, that they would become brave champions in the holy cause.

To Lady Portia, the anticipation of the Fête Dieu was full of delight; everywhere her presence was suggestive. Of course there could be

a procession—a very full procession, she was sure of it. If the Cardinal could take the time to visit Calabria, the nobility would esteem it a great privilege to render the occasion grand and imposing. The marchesi of various estates were appealed to, priests and laity were invited from abroad. There was abundant reason to suppose that the Viceroy of Naples would lend his presence. Ignoring all differences, the people of St. Xisto and La Guardia were invited, and everything was done to render the ceremony worthy of the name it bore.

In the mean time, Risaldo made another visit to Rome; when he returned Cardinal Alexandrini was with him. Friends in youth, the Count and Countess Montalto received the Cardinal with affection, while the marshalled household fell on their knees and kissed with reverential feeling his extended hand. In the prelate's manner there was a sweet suavity that went far toward winning the young people. In all their sports he was not satisfied without a part, while his easy-flowing speech impelled them to talk and act as in the presence of a friend.

"From what I have heard of him, I thought

him to be altogether a different man," Isera said as she saw the easy manner in which the Cardinal addressed Marcel and Victor.

"You have heard of him only in his official capacity," returned Lady Portia. "In his zeal for the church and his love for souls he is sometimes led to adopt severe measures. But his heart is tender; he never inflicts pain without himself feeling it. Cardinal Alexandrini is a sincere Christian."

"We all strive to be Christians, but there are conflicting views," continued Isera.

"True, some have more light than others, but it is one and the same religion," returned the wily woman with a smile of rare sweetness.

Isera grew bolder: "I cannot think that all these ceremonies make our hearts any better."

"You must not forget, Isera, that the church has always had a head; through this head we are favored with divine communications. The forms and usages of the church are of divine origin. To interpose our puny beliefs or to attempt to question is like flying into the face

of God. Those who do this are guilty of heresy."

"But when we compare the teaching of the apostles with the faith and practice of the church, I cannot make it appear that it is so much the outward manner as it is the inner spiritual life."

"What do you mean by the inner spiritual life?" asked Lady Portia with seeming truthfulness.

"The life we live because of the influence of the Divine Spirit; the love in our hearts breathing outward; an earnest spirit of charity, kind and tender, pervading all we do. Is not this the teaching of the Bible?"

"I am glad to see that you have an inquiring mind," said Lady Portia, coming near and lifting the hand of Isera in her own. "But you are very young, my child, to form an opinion on matters of religion. You are fortunate, however, in having in your house a man like Risaldo. A learned and able man, he makes your interest his care. Go to him, child, and tell him your thoughts—that doubts darken your mind, and that you are inclined to ques-

tion. Let him intercede for you; the prayers of the faithful are a sweet perfume to God."

Isera was in tears; for the first time she saw that she had spoken unadvisedly. The reference to Risaldo filled her heart with fear. She had never dreamed of speaking to him with the freedom she used to Lady Portia. She did not feel that she loved the church less; but she would stay these bitter persecutions; she would have every one worship God and enjoy himself according to the dictates of his own conscience. Neither would she set the ceremonies of the church over against the purity of heart and integrity of purpose found in the Vaudois people.

The day of the fete came. The chapel-entrance led down by a flight of steps into ornamental grounds, with clustering thickets of fragrant shrubs and trees. In these, pavilions were raised and altars placed, the whole constructed so that the procession could move along the grounds with precision and effect, as in the streets of some great city. The Viceroy was detained, but he sent a military detachment, which formed a pretty show and served to

keep order among the crowd of spectators and worshippers. The Cardinal had come with but few of his people, and apparently without a thought of the conspicuous place he was to fill. Through the combined energy of Risaldo and Lady Portia a large number of priests was collected, some in cassocks and others in full robes of purple. Cardinal Alexandrini wore scarlet stockings, and a mantle richly embroidered with flowers on a gold ground. Arches festooned with flowers, and trees cut in the form of temples, with banners and superscriptions, rendered the scene one of great beauty.

Flattering himself that in so large an assembly he would be permitted to pass unnoticed, Marcel gave himself little concern about the matter, lending his influence where it was useful, but otherwise indifferent. This did not escape the penetrating eye of Risaldo, and so skilfully had he formed the procession, the nobility according to rank, the old and the young conspicuous in their position, that there was no escape.

The opening services were imposing. A new banner, with the Virgin emblazoned upon it,

hung over the grand altar; everything was magnificent. At the elevation of the Host, when the people fell upon their knees, Marcel and Victor dared to stand, hopeful that the cloud of incense from the burning censers would so obscure the atmosphere as to render it impossible for the priests at the altar to mark the omission.

Forming in the chapel, the splendid cortége followed the Host as it was borne under a rich canopy through avenues bordered with flowers and covered with carpets and embroideries. Solemn music, a long train of military, with priests and nobles, mingled in the pageant. Making the circuit of the grounds, the procession once more returned to the chapel. The altar was one blaze of light. A number of the sisters from St. Stefano dell' Uliva joined in the services, and the music was of such a nature as to wrap the worshippers in a delirium of delight.

After this imposing ritual a grand entertainment was given within the walls of the castle, while the grounds were one scene of mirth and hilarity. During the evening the Cardinal

was even more gracious than usual. On the alert for something on which to base an accusation, Risaldo had noticed that not one of the Vaudois was present. This he had quickly made known to the Cardinal, and when the Count endeavored to excuse them as well-meaning people, but little accustomed to the ceremonies and ritual of the church, he answered playfully,

"If they do not understand, it is time for us to teach them"—significant words, and so craftily said that suspicion was disarmed, or failed rather to be aroused.

Before the Cardinal left he questioned Marcel and Victor of their studies, observing the advantage it was, both in an intellectual and a spiritual view, to be associated with a man of such rare mental attainments, and likewise one so thoroughly devoted to the church, as Risaldo.

"It is a time, however," continued the prelate, "when the church must call her ablest sons into council. Never have we been so straitened. The faithful are driven to their wits' end, while our enemies flourish." Then,

in his most persuasive tone, "After all, you need not lose the benefit of Risaldo's instruction. As children you did well to study here, but as young men come to Rome."

Less than a month after Cardinal Alexandrini left Calabria for Rome, Risaldo was recalled, and not long after that event came a papal messenger, with an invitation, that if refused would prove a command, for Count Montalto and his family to make their home in the Eternal City.

"Alas for this people!" said the Count as the Countess suggested some way of escape. "It is evident Cardinal Alexandrini looks upon me as their friend. Depend upon it, this is the first step. Risaldo's journeying to Rome was not without a motive."

"Favored with your confidence, is it possible he will accuse you of being too lenient?" asked the Countess, overcome with tears.

"Doubtless he has already done so," faltered the Count. "For myself I do not fear, but who will dare to speak for this people when I am gone?"

"There is one solace—we are to go with

you," said the Countess, striving to suppress her tears.

"And for the rest, let us trust in God," replied the Count.

CHAPTER XIV.

PASCHAL AND MARQUET IN PRISON.

THE persecution of the Christians in the valleys of Piedmont sent a thrill of despair to the hearts of the inhabitants of St. Xisto and La Guardia. Count Montalto had been a support to them; in his absence there was no one to whom they could go with equal freedom, no other who had so greatly befriended them. "When the priests complain," they said, "there is no one to check them." Added to this, they missed the visits of Barba Gilles, and a pastor to live with them stirred the enmity of their neighbors. Andrea had always been looked up to as counsellor and guide, but now he was overborne by the counsel of others. A fear of what might take place deprived them of their usual caution.

The wiser ones deliberated: "Are we able to act freely and to make ourselves conspicuous

without endangering our churches? Is it not better to bend to the times, and even secretly to put our affairs in order, so that we may retire to a place of safety at a moment's warning?"

Others argued that it was cowardice: "Virtually, we act as though we are ashamed of our religion. The battle is not always to the strong, neither is the race to the one of swiftest foot. If God is with us, we shall conquer, be we more or less."

With such confidence in God the people were well pleased; they needed the stimulant arising from such words, and from whom could they so well expect them as from a settled pastor? As we have seen, Andrea did not desert them. With his heart against it, he made a journey to Geneva, in order to solicit from the Italian Church the means of securing a pastor to Calabria who should reside with his people and devote himself exclusively to their interests. His request was granted, and to this honorable but perilous post a minister, still very young, was nominated—a Piedmontese who had quitted the profession of arms to become a soldier of Christ, an ambassador ready and willing to

proclaim his word in whatever position he might be placed.

John Louis Paschal was a native of Coni, and two days before his selection for this mission to Calabria he was betrothed to a young woman of his own people, Camilla Guarina, born like himself in Piedmont, and who like himself had fled to Geneva, in order to live according to the gospel. When he made known to her the call which he had received, and asked her consent to go into Southern Italy and leave her behind, the poor girl could only answer him with tears: "Alas! so near to Rome, and so far from me!" But she was a Christian, and she submitted.

Scarcely had Paschal arrived in Calabria when he began to preach the gospel in public, the Vaudois desiring it and his own zeal urging him thus to do. This open interpretation of the Scriptures greatly incensed the priesthood, and steps were immediately taken to call the pastor to account. Seeing that their youthful leader was in danger, the Vaudois pressed around him with the joyous affection of brethren, bidding him take courage, and themselves

showing more zeal for the word of God the more they saw the tumult it occasioned. Since Count Montalto was called away, the Marquis Spinello was the feudal lord to whom the Vaudois looked, and from whom they had at one time received marked kindness.

As time passed on and excitement increased rather than abated, a committee of the elders waited upon the Marquis to ask his intentions. Their reception was kind, but they saw at a glance that the mind of the Marquis was poisoned against them, or, otherwise, he feared for himself should he grant them favor; and the interview closed without satisfaction either to the one side or the other. Some weeks afterward the principal men of St. Xisto and La Guardia were invited to meet the Marquis at Fuscaldo, a small town not far distant. Thus summoned, they entreated their pastor to accompany them and to state their reasons for the course they had pursued.

When the deputation arrived at Fuscaldo, they went to a hostelry before they sought the Marquis. There they were met by Chaffrey, a firm friend of their doctrine, and likewise one

of the nobleman's people. Filled with fears, and anxious, if possible, to ward off the blow, this man had come purposely to solicit a few moments' conversation.

"Listen to me," said he. "You have powerful enemies; the best defence for the feeble is to keep out of their way. I advise you, therefore, to go back without presenting yourselves."

"What!" exclaimed Paschal; "shall I steal away without defending myself, without contending for the truth, without pleading for my beloved church?"

"The object in pleading is to gain a cause; in this instance it can only be gained by keeping silence," returned Chaffrey.

"That would not only be feeble, but cowardly," said Paschal, breaking out in holy ardor. "The Christian is not to measure his strength, but to do his duty. The help of God cannot fail in this conflict. I rely upon him; I shall go forward."

"Prudence is necessary as well as zeal. I beg you to take heed. You will not be judged according to the word of God, but according to that of man," continued Chaffrey.

"What then? The honor of defending the word of God is better than a hundred triumphs over man," exclaimed the pastor.

"You will defend it by preaching it to your churches. Believe me, there is no good in exposing it to the contempt of those who wish to suppress it."

"It is the churches themselves which are called to account, and their pastor ought to be there," in a softened tone.

"I am truly sorry," said Chaffrey, turning away to hide his tears, "for I see full well what the end must be."

"God will not leave us in extremity," replied Paschal. "Truth will prevail; and if he wills that we are to be purified with fire, so be it unto us. Go back I cannot; in going forward we do but follow where God leads."

When this brave young pastor stood in the presence of the Marquis and his friends he saw that Chaffrey was right. He was not sent for to contend in an honest contest, to use reason and gospel statements against errors sincerely held. His enemies desired not truth, but silence; they wished not to destroy error,

but the protests made against it. Paschal therefore had the grief of at once being deprived of the friends whom he already had, and of the adversaries whom he expected to find. The Marquis, having heard him for some time, during which the laity kept silence, sent those away whom alone he had cited, and retained the pastor and Andrea as prisoners. For some cause the latter was soon released, but Paschal remained for eight months in the prison of Fuscaldo.

When Andrea reached home he found that Marquet was in the hands of his enemies. In the absence of the pastor he had undertaken to speak to the people, and the priests, seeing that he was effectual in keeping them together, lodged a complaint against him.

Anxious for the release of her brother, Christina besought her parents to permit her to go to the castle for the purpose of asking clemency from the Marquis Spinello.

"It is by no means a prudent undertaking," said the father, "for it is possible that, seeing you, our enemies will rejoice to deprive me of both my children."

"But, father, I have once been received at the castle as a favored guest. Surely the Marquis will not have forgotten."

"Alas, my child! it is but too evident that Count Montalto was removed because he was our friend. The Marquis Spinello is governed by a higher power. Rome holds the reins in her hands; the nobles are her instruments to use as she will."

"Only say I may go, father;" and the tender, pleading eyes were fixed on Andrea's worn face.

"If your mother does not refuse, child;" and, drawing Christina to his bosom, the father kissed her tenderly.

"Give me your blessing, mother, for I must set forth to-day," said Christina, kneeling at her mother's feet.

"God be with thee, child, by the way and when thou sittest down! and may the Marquis be inclined to look upon thy youth and pity thee!"

Hastening to her chamber, Christina put on her best attire, and, commending herself to God in prayer, departed.

Weary and dust-covered, the young girl pre-

sented herself before the Marquis as he was preparing to go to Fuscaldo for the purpose of giving directions concerning the prisoners. Touched with the remembrance of her last visit, he received her kindly, and was about to lead her to the Marchioness. Christina, with her cheeks covered with blushes, begged him to consider that she was not now on a visit, but simply to ask him to grant liberty to her brother Marquet and her pastor Louis Paschal.

The expression of kindness faded into one of severity, and leading her into a private room he endeavored to make her see that this was not in his power.

"Only tell me that you will use your influence," pleaded Christina.

"My influence is nothing in church matters. If this is all you came to say to me, I must leave you with Roderi; he is much better able to help you than I am;" saying which, the Marquis took his leave. Blinded with tears, Christina tottered to the door.

"Stay, daughter," said Roderi, who met her on the threshold of the room, in a voice of kindness. "Tell me what troubles thee; per-

haps it is, as the Marquis says, that I can help thee."

There was in his tones so much of seeming kindness, that Christina was won to return. Roderi professed himself desirous to hear all, and with many tears on her part the story was again repeated. At the close the priest said with courtesy,

"If you will cause your brother to renounce his errors, I will see that he is liberated."

"May I ask you to specify those errors?" Christina asked respectfully.

"Does your brother go to mass?"

"No."

"Does he bow to the Host?"

"No."

"Why not?" was asked with almost savage ferocity.

"We do not believe that the Host personates the real body of Christ; it is not for us to bow to it."

"Then you are a heretic as well as Marquet?"

"This is the teaching of our church; we do but carry out her precepts," was the reply.

"But when you come to see that they are wrong?"

"We believe in the doctrine of the apostles; we would be judged by the sacred writings," was answered without hesitation.

"Beware, fair child! you will be judged by the Holy See, whose officials, jealous for the interest of the church, will not do wrong."

"Men are liable to be mistaken," was the modest reply.

"Promise that you will win your brother to say this, and it will answer. I cannot say as much for Louis Paschal."

"If I am permitted to see my brother, I will tell him all that has passed between us."

"Remember that his release is in your own power," said Roderi as they left the apartment.

On the way to Fuscaldo, Christina was passive, as one who has neither eyes nor ears nor tongue; but, inwardly alive, her soul was going out to Jesus for wisdom and for strength. Reaching the prison, Roderi gave directions for the keeper to permit Christina to talk with her brother, but first of all to show her through

the different chambers, in order to explain to her the various modes of torture whereby the soul of the heretic was purged and brought back to the true faith. Then she was shown into dark, noisome vaults, far below the surface, reserved for the stubborn and for those who boldly defied the church in face of all its warnings.

"It is fearful!" exclaimed Christina as she gazed upon the fiendish instruments of a slow but certain death. Roderi stopped above; there was no one near her but the keeper. "Is it possible that people have suffered and died here?" she asked, looking into his dark face.

"Could you endure the thought of such a place?" He turned and faced her, while his eyes flashed. "Flee heresy if you would escape it. Have nothing to do with a church, whether right or wrong, that must eventually be crushed by the power of our church."

Coming back to the daylight, the young girl was led through a long, narrow passage of dark gray stone into a court opening on all sides into cells. In one of these she found Marquet. In pity the keeper had allowed him pen and paper,

and he was busy writing a hymn. The meeting with Christina was tender, but no tears were shed; time was too precious and they had too much to say. The keeper had the consideration to leave them by themselves. After Marquet had inquired as to his parents, he began to talk of the affairs of the church and of the desire he had that he might be strong to suffer all God's will. At once Christina told him of her interview with the Marquis, and afterward of the questions Roderi had put to her, and at last the reason why she was permitted to see him.

"But you did not think I would retract?" he asked, gazing into the fair upturned face.

"I knew you would not; I did not come to persuade you to do this."

"When I think of what the Master endured, I do not consider it a grievous thing to follow in his steps, but I am grieved for you and for my father. Do you know if he has heard from Count Montalto?"

"He has no definite intelligence, but he fears—"

"What?"

"Imprisonment, torture, death!" stammered Christina.

"And Marcel?" questioned Marquet.

"Marcel will not deny his faith," came through the white lips.

The jailer returned at the specified time, surprised to find them singing and praising God. Roderi was with him.

"Are you ready to leave?" the latter asked as he looked into Marquet's radiant face.

"Have I permission to go with my sister?"

"That is what she came here for."

A perplexed look crept into Christina's face.

"Did you not come for the purpose of persuading your brother to retract?" asked Roderi.

"I said, that if you would permit me to see my brother, I would tell him all that passed between us."

"Well, did you not know what I desired you to say?"

"I know that you desired me to urge my brother to confess that he had been in error. This I cannot do, for I do not think that he has been in error; and if I did, my brother is not

one to be persuaded to admit what he knows to be false."

"We have but a few moments. Be sure that you well weigh the matter," whispered the turnkey to Marquet. "It is not much to admit. Only affirm that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is renewed daily in the sacrifice of the mass."

"Christ died once for all, and he is now in heaven, from which he will not come again until the last day."

"You do not, then, believe in his corporeal presence in the Host?" asked Roderi.

"God forbid!"

"Do you not think God is able to do all things?"

"Most certainly. But the one sacrifice was for all time. The atonement once made, there is no necessity to renew it. It is by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved, not by works."

"I perceive that it is foolishness to waste time upon one who is determined to reject the kindness of those who would save him.—And as for you, young woman, if this is the way you

work, it would be as well that those who have the authority should assign you a place in one of the cells you have just visited."

"I have kept my promise; Marquet will bear me out in this," was said gently but firmly.

Exasperated, but still powerless to do more without orders, Roderi walked away, but not before he signified to the jailer that it was time for Christina to leave.

Marquet opened his arms to embrace her.

"Let not the assaults of evil men lead thee to deny the faith. God is very near to his suffering children," Christina sweetly whispered.

"My trust is in him, dear sister. I trust him likewise to care for thee. May his presence abide with thee, and abound! Tell my mother that heaven is nearer than it ever was before. And my father must not be troubled. If I am to be delivered, God will provide a way."

Christina spoke through her tears: "May God sustain thee, and grant, if it be possible, that we meet again!"

As Christina turned to her humble home, Chaffrey met her and brought her into his own

dwelling, giving her rest and refreshment, otherwise she had fainted by the way.

"How is it?" asked Christina, "that you who are of our faith live in peace so near Spinello Castle?"

"I do not intrude myself upon them, and as yet they have not thought to question me."

"Where did you learn of our doctrine?"

"It was from Marcel of Montalto that I learned to love the simple faith and practice of your people. At that time the two families were on good terms with each other. Alas! it is to be feared that it was this cause that led to the removal of the Count. His estates, if forfeited through heresy, will revert to the Holy See."

"I had no suspicion of this; even now I can hardly believe that the church will carry her exactions thus far."

"I have heard the Marquis Spinello say as much; and that, depend upon it, is the cause of his severity. The church dictates to the noble as well as to the peasant."

"Afraid to do us justice? Is that it?" Christina exclaimed.

"To be accused of heresy is to lose all," interrupted Chaffrey.

"Still, you are willing to risk it?"

"More than willing, and yet I would be prudent. Knowing the Marquis, I did what I could to prevent the meeting, and now I will do my best to liberate the prisoners."

"Have you a plan?" asked the maiden.

"At present their bars are not strong. With a simple file I think Marquet could easily escape."

"Will it be right?"

"To escape as David did from Saul? We are not called upon to throw away our lives, but to use them."

"This file—how will it reach him?"

"I can slip it into a loaf of bread."

"And then?" questioned Christina, hardly able to suppress a cry of joy.

"It is not far to the sea; I will have a boat in readiness."

"But, Chaffrey, we shall not see him."

"Will it not be a comfort to know that he is free? And now go home, and with your parents pray that my good woman may be successful in raising her loaves."

There was no reply; tears were running down her cheeks. Nevertheless, they were tears of joy; there was hope. She held his promise; she would ask God to bless his efforts for Marquet's liberation.

CHAPTER XV.

MARTYRDOM OF PASCHAL.

MARQUET so far made his escape as to reach the sea, but Paschal was reserved for a different fate. Not many days after, he was conducted to Naples, along with twenty-two prisoners condemned to the galleys.

"The person who was appointed to conduct us," he said in a letter to his bride, "put on me manacles so tight that I could not repose either day or night. I was obliged to bribe him to open them a little, and he did not take them off till he had succeeded in getting from me all the money I possessed. The galley-slaves were fastened by the neck to a long chain. They got nothing but coarse herbs for their food, with a slice of bread; and when one of them fell down from fatigue, they forced him to rise by beating him unmercifully. During the night the beasts were better treated than we, for at

least they gave them litter, whilst as for us we were left on the bare ground."

Nine days were spent in this way before they arrived at Naples; and in the bark which conveyed them thither Paschal ceased not to preach and exhort, proclaiming the fulness and the necessity of the salvation which is by Jesus Christ.

It was not the purpose of pope or prelate to keep Paschal at Naples. A few days, and we find him transferred to Rome. He entered the city, May 15, 1560, by the gate of Ostium, the same by which the apostles and primitive martyrs were conducted into it. Fourteen centuries had nearly passed, and the same scenes were to be renewed—more bloody, if possible, than those of the Gentiles.

Paschal was imprisoned in the tower of Nona, which was designed for criminals. He remained there four months, and very few, it is said, were permitted to see him. Already dead as to his connection with the world, nothing can be known of the proceedings with regard to him, save only that he was frequently interrogated and urged to recant, but without effect.

Bartholomew Paschal, who had neither abjured Roman Catholicism nor the affections of the human heart, made an attempt to save his brother Louis. For this purpose a journey to Rome was necessary. He set out from Coni with a recommendation from the governor of that city and a letter from the Count de la Trinita. In consequence of these introductions from persons high in credit at the Papal court, and perhaps also because it was hoped that his influence would lead his brother to abjure, Bartholomew succeeded in making his way to the gloomy and fetid dungeon where Louis was confined.

"I went last evening," he wrote to his family, "to pay my respects to the Grand Inquisitor, Cardinal Alexandrini. But when I spoke to him of my brother, he replied sharply, that that fellow had been a great pest in the country, and that even on the rack he had done nothing but preach his nonsense. I then went to speak to the judges who examined him. They told me, that he became always more and more obstinate, and that his was a bad business. I entreated them in his favor, and they replied, that

for any other crime, however enormous, pardon might have been possible, but that for having attacked the church, at least unless he recanted, there could be no pardon. Then I returned to see the Cardinal, and at last I obtained leave to visit my brother. Great God! It was frightful to see him amidst the gloom of those damp walls, meagre, pale, enfeebled, bareheaded; his arms tied with small ropes, which went into the flesh; ill of fever, and not even having straw to lie upon. But, desiring to embrace him, I cast myself upon the ground, and he said to me,

"'My brother, why do you distress yourself so much? Know you not that a leaf cannot fall from a tree without the will of God?'

"The judge who accompanied me imposed silence upon him, saying, 'Hold your peace, you heretic!'

"And I added, 'Is it possible, my brother, that you are obstinate in disowning the Catholic faith, which everybody else holds?'

"'I hold that of the gospel,' he replied.

"'Think you, then,' asked the judge, 'that God will condemn all those who do not follow your doctrine?'

"'It is not for me to determine, but I know that he will condemn those who, knowing the truth, fail to accept it and to act upon it.'

"'You speak of truth, but you disseminate error,' continued the judge.

"'Can you prove that by the gospel?' asked Louis.

"'You would have done far better to have remained still in your own house, enjoying your inheritance and dwelling among your brethren, instead of rushing into heresy and losing all that you had,' spoke the judge, without answering the question.

"'I have nothing to lose here upon the earth that I must not lose sooner or later; and I acquire an inheritance in heaven, which all the powers of the earth shall not be able to take from me.'"

During three following days successive members of the Holy Office dealt with Paschal, for more than four hours at each time, in the hope of inducing him to recant, and perhaps, also, of being able then to give him up to his brother; but they could get no concession. "Then," resumes Bartholomew, "I entreated him to yield

a little, and not to bring upon his family the disgrace of a condemnation.

"'Must I honor my Saviour less than them, that I am to become perjured to him?'

"'You will honor him in your heart, although you remain in the church.'

"'If I am ashamed of him on the earth, he will deny me in heaven.'

"'Ah, my dear brother, return to the bosom of your family; we would all be so happy to have you there!'

"'Would to God that we were all met again, united in the Saviour's love, for my native skies would be pleasanter to me than the vaults of this prison! But if I remain here, it is because Jesus abides with me, and my Saviour is better to me than my family.'

"'Would it be to lose him to come with us?'

"'Yes, for the gate of my dungeon will not open except by means of an abjuration, and that would be the loss of my soul.'

"'Your friends, then, are nothing to you?'

"'Jesus says, "He that is not ready to give up his father or his mother for my sake is not worthy of me."'

"Then I went the length," continues Bartholomew, "of promising him the half of all that I had if he would come back with me to Coni; but he with tears answered me that to hear me utter such words afflicted him much more grievously than the fetters with which he was bound; 'for the world passeth away, with the lusts thereof, but the word of God endureth for ever.'

"And when I wept also, he added, 'God grant me such strength that I may never forsake him!'

"Then the monk said to him, 'If you will die, die then!'

"Three days later I found means to speak with him again, and when the monk of the judges was proceeding to exhort him anew, he said to him,

"'All your arguments are founded upon human prudence; but do not shut your eyes to the grace of God, for you will be inexcusable before him.'

"The monk was very much astonished, and said to him, 'God have mercy upon us!'

"'Oh that he may!' added the prisoner. But the day following he made a sign to me

that I should be gone, having perceived that the inquisitors had began to suspect me; and so I left him without speaking, and returned to Piedmont."

We find another expression of Paschal's feelings in a letter to his bride:

"The affection which I bear to you increases with the increase of my love to Christ, and the more that I have made progress in the Christian religion, the more also have I loved you." Then, giving her to understand that his death might soon be expected, he says, "Console yourself in Jesus Christ, and let your life be an exhibition of his doctrine."

From his prison, the Tower of Nona, he was conducted to the Convent of Minerva, there to hear his condemnation. "He confirmed," says one, "with a steadfast and joyful heart, all the answers which he had already given, rendering thanks to God for having called him to the glory of martyrdom; and the following day (September 10) he was taken to the square of the Castle St. Angelo, near the bridge over the Tiber, where the pile had been prepared. Pope Pius was present. But we are told he would

have been glad to be elsewhere, or that Paschal had been dumb or the people deaf; for that worthy spoke many things that moved the spectators and displeased him much."

Upon this account the inquisitors caused him to be strangled, fearing, perhaps, that his voice might still be raised in the midst of the flames to proclaim the truth. The flames, therefore, only consumed his corpse, and his ashes were cast into the Tiber. "He died," wrote his brother Bartholomew, "with a marvellous constancy and joy."

CHAPTER XVI.

MARCEL HURRIED TO PRISON.

MOONLIGHT lay on the Vatican and a solemn stillness brooded over the Eternal City. Strange rumors were afloat of omens and fearful visions of saintly seers. The ashes had been blown from the red embers of persecution, and the stake and the axe drank the blood of Christians.

In a villa that overlooked the Tiber lights were flashing and messengers were going to and fro with that quick tread and sharp, piercing look that speaks more than anxiety. In an inner room, lit by a brazen lamp and fragrant with the breath of perfumed oil, a mother watched and waited for her son.

Pushing aside a purple embroidered curtain, a fair young girl approached the anxious watcher:

"Sweet mother, do not give way to grief; it

is but rumor, and until confirmed I shall not credit it."

"Alexis said, 'All Christians,' child; Marcel is not one to deny his faith."

"Marcel is still within the pale of the church. It is impossible! They dare not lay violent hands upon him."

"Being within the pale of the church did not save Bartholomew Paschal from being followed by lying spies. I tremble when I think of it."

"These are dark days, sweet mother; my heart pines for our old Calabrian home. What peaceful evenings we had on the green, sloping shore, looking away to catch the distant sails, and then up to the white floating clouds, wondering if they would bear us through the air, and almost longing to feel the pressure of their fleecy folds!"

"No more to be ours, fair child."

"Do you remember, mother, how we used to walk to the small temple in the olive-grove —Caia with garlands on her head, and Victor bounding through the dusky paths, with Marcel seated in Beppo's boat far out on the blue

waters of the sea, playing his flute? Would I could hear it there again!"

"It is not well to recall the past, dear child; its weight of sweetness on our heavy hearts will make them break too soon. List, child! there's a loud knocking at the gate."

"I hear nothing," said the girl, bending her ear to catch the sound. "It is not late; Marcel is often from us at this hour."

"I can but fear; since this secret mission on which your father was sent I have had no peace. I did not use to tremble at every breath of wind as I do now. The slightest noise by day or night quickens my pulses to fever heat."

"Is it not time for my father to return?"

"I asked Risaldo that very question, and he said, affairs of church were too important to be despatched in haste. I judge it is an uncertain mission."

"I wish they could have chosen some one else."

"I know not what I fear, and still I fear. In our Calabrian home your father was too lenient and too kind. Risaldo often told him this, and Cardinal Alexandrini plainly showed that

in affairs of the church a man of sterner stuff would better please."

"And still the Cardinal called him here to send him, as he said, on this secret mission for the church?"

"They said so openly, but I greatly fear it was a skilful plot laid by his foes to his undoing."

"Is it so? Have you such fears?"

"Forgive me, sweet child. I should have clutched the burden to my heart, and held it there without your seeing it. It may be nothing but my broken health—a phantom conjured out of my weak nerves. Let us think that it is nothing else. Kiss me, love, and sing to me one of the hymns Christina taught thee in our old home."

"Was it to these my father was too lenient and too kind?" A trembling look was on the young face in catching at a new thought. "I remember how Christina looked up to him; and that young brother—I trust no harm has come to them."

"A quiet people. But sing, child. In thinking of the past my heart will break."

Isera sang, then stopped to listen.

"To the window, love! There's a noisy uproar in the street, or is it at the gate?"

"I hear a step; 'tis Marcel's. Let me meet and bring him here, dear mother."

"As you will."

"What mean these rumors and this deep-seated hush? Does danger threaten us, my son?" and Countess Montalto tottered forward as Marcel entered to meet the tender clasping of her child.

"You have heard that the soul of the young pastor has gone home?"

"It was told us on every side."

"And that Bartholomew was suspected, a good churchman as he claims to be?"

"So we were told."

A shade of sorrow passed over Marcel's face, and, throwing his arm around his mother's neck, he laid his cheek to hers, as when a child at play he stopped and bared his heart, then played again, happier because his mother knew his thought.

"Canst bear to hear still more, dear mother?"

"Does it touch thee, Marcel?"

"If it touches me at all, it is but the outer coat. I am more troubled for thee and for my precious sister than for myself."

"Speak plainly, child."

"'Tis said that I have been too kind to Paschal—have visited him in his cell, dressing his wounds and strengthening him in his blind obstinacy. To-day the Cardinal questioned me, and to-night the Pope himself has given me an audience."

"You told him all? Alas, my son!"

"Would you have it otherwise? Should I have been double-tongued, leading him to think me one with him, when my heart revolts at such misdeeds as we have seen this day?"

"My heart is weak, my son, and still I honor you for being true—true to yourself and to your God."

"Thanks, dear mother. Now is my heart lightened of a load that weighed it down with heaviness; now I feel that I can bear whatever there is in store for me. The fear that you would be troubled caused my feet to loiter. Once again, dear mother, let me hear you say you do not blame me.—And my sister? Come

near, Isera. Let me clasp your hand and tell you all there is for me to tell."

"You are so solemn, Marcel! With your presence I thought our fears would vanish."

"The very air we breathe is full of solemn thought, my sister. The sunshine has grown dim, and the silvery beauty of the night has donned a leaden hue."

"Is it so serious?" kneeling by his side.

"So that it does not take thee from us, my son? Since your father has gone on this secret embassy I greatly fear some mischief will befall him. And should harm come to thee—"

"Your words leave my heart weak to tell you of a plan the Pope himself proposed. He says the church must keep her garments clean, and for this purpose heresy must be put down —not cut off, but uprooted. Then, and not till then, can she stand forth in her brightness. With him, the death of Louis Paschal is not the end, but the beginning. The purport of his words to-night was to see if I would be willing to go back with power to reprove the Vaudois people for their apostasy; and, if they yield not to threatening, to at last compel them

to deny their creed, abjure their errors, and sue for mercy from the church from which they have so grievously departed."

"He said all this?"

"And more. He bade me go as one obliged to do so, like a blind puppet or a senseless stock. And when I made bold to answer, refusing to accept of such a mission, his face was scarlet, and his words low and smooth, as only words can be where passion is suppressed."

"We are lost, my son."

"Could I have done less, dear mother? Could I have gone to our Calabrian home openly to upbraid those who were once my friends? Could I have accused them of apostasy, myself an inquisitor feeding on their agony, for the sole purpose of assuring the Holy See that I am a true as well as a noble son of the church?"

"Does danger menace them like this?" asked Isera, creeping still closer to Marcel. "And Christina? what will become of her?"

"My heart aches for her and for Marquet. He was a noble youth.—You do not blame me, mother? It was a work I could not do."

"I would not have you do it though we lose

Montalto.

Page 163.

all we have on earth," embracing him. "But to the Pope; did you part in anger?"

"Not with high words, but still without the usual benediction."

"Alas! all is lost!"

"Not all, dear mother. The satisfaction of doing right is ours; the hope of heaven is ours; the time of receiving our inheritance nearer, perhaps, than we have thought."

"I tremble when I think of what the end may be," said the Countess, lifting the dark curls from the white forehead.

"If my father were here, the Pope would not dare to speak threateningly to his son," exclaimed Isera. "Cannot we ask delay if anything should happen? I feel sure His Holiness will not refuse a favor I should ask."

"Hush! there's a tumult without. Methinks it stops near us.—What is it, my son?"

"I will go and see, and then return."

"We will go with you," rising hurriedly. "If one must go to prison, then all must go."

"That cannot be, noble lady," said a gendarme, pressing his way in spite of the attendants. "A word with this young man."

Montalto.

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"Can you tell us of what he is accused?" stammered the Countess.

"Of that he is informed better than I am; my duty is to show him to new quarters."

"To-night?"

"This moment."

"Dear mother, have no fears; the heavens are very near us."

"It is dark, very dark, my child."

"Nay, mother, the light is breaking. One kiss. I must go.—Kiss me, dear sister, and think of me as one near to God."

"Marcel, this must not be. I will go to the Pope; I will entreat him on my knees."

"Sweet mother, give not way to grief. Isera will comfort thee. Farewell, and, if God wills it, farewell for ever."

"One moment, Marcel. Another kiss. I cannot let thee go."

"Sweet mother, as God wills," coming back and throwing his arms around his mother's neck.

There was a call outside, and ringing steps.

"Isera, I may not wait; farewell," tearing himself from the loving arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

GEOFFREY'S MARTYRDOM AND VICTOR'S DARING.

THE last rays of the setting sun flashed across the yellow waters of the Tiber. The Forum swarmed with the excited populace, and the streets leading to the prison at the foot of the Capitoline Hill were lined with soldiers. Presently a band of armed men emerged from the strong gateway, driving before them a feeble old man. With white hair and a spare frame, he reminds one of another, centuries before, led to his imprisonment along the Appian Way, tottering, but still with an eye as bright as an eagle's. No, the heart of the aged prisoner has not grown old; his feelings have not become resentful; he has not lost any of his human sensibilities or attachments under all his wrongs and afflictions. Yet with all his longing for absent friends, and with his tender susceptibility

to the terrible injuries heaped upon him, he glories and rejoices. He counts himself to have already gained the victory. He sees the crown waiting for him. He has a Defender higher and mightier than the Cæsars. Like Paul, this feeble, white-bearded man can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Twice he has been led from the dungeon to face his judges; twice has he been racked until the joints were nearly dislocated and the sinews almost parted. But he cannot retract. The love of Christ in his soul constrains him to follow on. What is the present suffering compared to the glories revealed in Christ, the joy, the rest of heaven? Looking upon the people, his heart is moved; his hands are manacled, but his voice is clear and strong. He opens his lips to deliver a last message. The memory of Paschal's words still burn in the minds of the inquisitors; a blow on the old man's mouth is followed by a stream of blood. The rabble shout in mockery; the soldiers drive on the prisoner. The pile is already kindled. In

sight of it the company halt; the soldiers fall back; a dark-robed monk faces the aged Christian martyr:

"It is not too late; the church is merciful. Confess your error and return, and all will be forgiven."

"'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' This is not an error; I cannot deny it," said the prisoner in a firm voice.

"Only say that you bow to the Host, that you believe in Christ's vicegerent as the head of the church on earth," persisted the monk.

"I believe only in Christ, the Son of the Father," was the reply.

"Enough! enough, old man! If you will die, die!—To your duty, men!" exclaimed the judge, turning to the soldiers.

What more the prisoner would have said was lost in the crackling of the flames, while the soul of the martyr went up, from amid the cries of the rabble and the jests and gibes of the mocking crowd.

As the old man emerged from the dungeon a young man entered. Let us follow him into

the first of two vaulted chambers, one above the other, excavated in the rock. The upper one is far below the surface of the ground, and the lower deep of the one beneath is entered only through a small circular opening in the stone floor of the one above. No window or door was left for the light of the sun or the fresh air of heaven to enter that dread abode. The floor, the walls, the roof, are all stone, damp, dark, cold, the sight of which makes the flesh creep and the heart shudder with horror. The young man has been on the rack; they have plied him with questions, and, having caused him to gaze upon the burning pile, they have threatened him with the same fiery chariot if he still refused.

"Not for myself! not for myself!" he murmurs as he enters the dreadful place, "but for my mother and Isera." The next instant a thrill of triumph lifts him above the chill damp of his dungeon: "God will take care of them. He has promised. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.'"

Weary with the day, Cardinal Alexandrini was about to enter his palace when a veiled woman threw herself before him. Moved by the air of graceful reverence, he touched her shoulder:

"Rise, daughter, and tell me in what way I can serve thee."

"An audience, Your Excellency."

"The voice tells me it is the Countess Montalto. But why here, fair lady?"

Leading the way into the palace, the Cardinal listened as the Countess spoke of her husband and her son:

"It is now ten days since we have seen Marcel, and we know nothing of his accusers."

"These are sad times," returned the Cardinal. "The church would be lenient, but heresy is on the increase and many of her sons are obstinate."

"Count Montalto was faithful to the church, else why was he sent on this secret embassy?" The sad, truthful eyes of the Countess were turned to the prelate's face, but it revealed nothing. The secret embassy had troubled her, but Marcel's fate lay heavy on her heart.

"Persuade your son to go to Calabria with power to crush all those who will not conform to the church, and all will be well," said the Cardinal after a pause.

"How can I do this, Your Excellency? In Calabria we have many friends who prefer a simpler creed."

"Beware, fair lady!" a look of severity creeping over the swarthy face. "This is what makes it so cruel; personal feeling must not bias those who are responsible for souls. The authority of the church is paramount; she exacts an unhesitating obedience. Yield this and your son is safe."

"I will consider it, Your Excellency."

The audience was at an end. Cardinal Alexandrini saw his visitor totter to the door. For a moment his head bowed with a touch of softer feeling at his heart. When he raised it more than usual sternness was there. Another sacrifice of self, perhaps—another triumph for the church over which he thought to keep such vigilant watch.

Raising the purple embroidered curtain, Countess Montalto entered the apartment she

had quitted with so much of hope but an hour before. The pallor of death was on her face and her lips trembled with agony.

"All is lost, my child!" clasping her arms around Isera. "There is no alternative."

"You saw the Cardinal, dear mother?"

"He promises nothing, my child, unless we persuade Marcel to go back to Calabria with power to crush our Vaudois friends."

"Something that we will never do," was said in a clear, frank voice; and the next moment Victor entered the room, drawing the heavily-embroidered screen closely behind him.

"What is it, Victor? Is it fear for yourself or anxiety as to Marcel's fate that makes your cheeks so white? Speak out, my son."

"I would be drawn in pieces rather than do the deeds the church permits and sanctions. Not satisfied with burning Geoffrey alive, they will not allow his friends the poor satisfaction of gathering up his ashes. With lingering love, the wretched wife followed him to the stake, and as the fires went out scraped up the bones with her thin, trembling hands, when a soldier struck a brutal blow that felled her to the ground.

I could not help it, mother; I struck him back, and with such force that he reeled and tottered."

"Did he rise again?"

"Yes, and with so much valor and his passion so much up, that I was obliged to cut my way, and thus I am weak and wasted as you see."

"At such a time it was not prudent, boy. I am afraid the man will hunt you out, and thus not one son, but both, be taken from me."

"He well deserved it. Poor woman! It would have pained your heart to have seen her face, so white and thin, and still with something glad and exultant, as though, the anguish passed, she could think calmly."

"Did you see Geoffrey? Did you catch the last expression of his face?" Isera asked.

"He bore himself nobly, with the calm, earnest look of one who has already in himself more of heaven than earth."

Alexis brought a note written in cipher. The Countess wept and trembled.

"It comes from Chaffrey, asking help. Alas! what can we do?" Victor exclaimed, laying the poor dumb paper in his mother's hand.

"Poor Chaffrey! It would break his heart

to know that Marcel had been ordered back with power to torture, even to the death, those whom he once termed friends," said Isera.

"Better death than such base living!" exclaimed Victor.

Silence brooded over the room, and such deep thoughts as make words weak to mirror them. At length the Countess spoke:

"Did Risaldo tell thee of thy father's journey, and when he will return?"

"He silenced me by saying, it was not for him to question, and for me it was sufficient honor to have my father sent on such an embassy."

"I cannot free myself from the thought that there is ill connected with it. This wish to send Marcel to Calabria makes me fear your father has been sent there to harass the people against his will."

"He would not do it; my father would rebel," said Isera with flashing eyes.

"Then imprisonment," added Victor.

"I cannot sleep. The possibility that he may be languishing his life out in some dark cell or dungeon, deep under ground, will not let me

rest. Better to know that death has cut short the thread of life than linger in such torture."

"Do not weep, sweet mother; better times are coming," exclaimed Victor. "God will not suffer such butchery of his people without retribution."

"These days bring to mind much that Christina used to say. With her clearer vision she foresaw suffering for her people, and her songs were songs of triumph and deliverance," Isera whispered, giving her mother's hand a clinging pressure. The noise in the streets had sensibly died away. It was a comfort in their sorrow to have Victor with them, and thoughts of Christina and the dear Calabrian home made her heart lighter.

Gradually, like the rolling waves of a great sea, came the tumult of gathering crowds. The Countess trembled and clung still closer to her children.

"It will not harm thee, sweet mother," said Isera.

"In every noise I fear that they are coming to deprive me of my children."

"Hark! ho!" came from without.

The tramping of men was in the courtyard, and heavy steps were on the stairs.

"Back! at your peril!" It was Alexis' voice.

"Who says I cannot enter?"

"I say it," said Victor, slipping away from the clasping hands of his mother and Isera; and, darting under the curtain, he let it fall behind him.

"We have no further need, since you are here, young man," said the soldier, sheathing his weapon.

"By what authority?" exclaimed Victor.

"Read for yourself," answered the official, flourishing a paper in the air.

"A moment, to take leave of my mother," said the youth.

"Make short work of it, young man; we were not told to wait," was the rough reply.

Once more raising the curtain, Victor dropped on his knees before his mother and Isera:

"It is the Pope's order; help me to bear it bravely. What God wills must be for the best. And he wills it or it would not be." Then, quickly passing under the curtains, he disap-

peared, leaving Isera and her mother half beside themselves with grief.

"Make haste! Call Alexis, child. Let us follow and share his fate, whatever it may be," exclaimed the Countess.

"Bear patiently, dear mother; it was the Pope's order. We cannot follow without his permission."

"Alas! it is this uncertainty! Gone! all gone! and I know not whither."

"I cannot think it serious; Victor is all too young," replied Isera.

"Youth will not avail one who dares maintain his right to think for himself. But tears will do no good; a mother's pleading will not save her boy."

"To-morrow it may be possible to ask an audience. And if you would be strong, dear mother, you must rest. Shall I sing one of the songs we used to sing?"

"Alas, my child! thy mother sets thee but a poor example."

Isera sings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PIETRO AND IMOLA IN VENICE.

IT was a gala-day in Venice. From the palace of the Doge streamers floated and banners waved, while the windows and doors of St. Mark's were alive with people. Music filled the air, and floral arches everywhere abounded. As the sun went down a tumult of joy came from all parts of the city; colored lamps flashed and sparkled; gondolas shot by; black dominoes and masks glided in and out and were lost in the crowd. Men with drawn visors and women sumptuously attired, youth and age, want and decrepitude, were alike animated with the spirit of enjoyment.

On the balcony of a ducal palace a lady sat watching the crowd, and still the weary look on the young face showed want of sympathy. A mask was in her hand and a black mantle half concealed her alabaster throat and queenly fig-

ure. A band of soldiers smartly dressed, with spears and shields, passed by; then mountebanks, with jesters in caps and bells, flinging their quips and followed by a wild, uproarious crowd, showing these antics pleased the populace. Still, the lady sat listless and half dreaming, starting up at times, then sinking back into the shadow of the clustering vines. At length there came a dwarfish-looking elf, with a woman crooked and bent, each with a reed, singing and playing, the dwarf stopping occasionally to throw up his head and blow a jest into the faces of the motley crowd.

"So, ho, Pietro! a pretty dancer! The Doge himself would laugh to see thee mince along. Straighten up, lad! Not a soldo will you get to wet your whistle with, at such a rate."

At this the dwarf lifted himself, standing on his toes and setting all the bells in action, while the woman played faster, dancing in turn a wild, fantastic dance, now almost double like a hoop, then making an ineffectual attempt to stand erect, causing the people to laugh still more. The dwarf stood shaking his elfish head, open-

ing his huge mouth and catching the scudi in his glittering teeth.

Slipping through the crowd, Pietro threw back his load of borrowed hair, with bells and mask and the great pack on his smooth shoulders, and emerged a lad of compact form and supple limbs, with a comely face and eyes of marked intelligence.

"Imola," he whispered to the bent, crouching figure at his side, "it is time; this is the palace, and, if I mistake not, Lady Aurelia is already waiting."

Quick as the words, the curved back straightened, the mat of gray hair was tossed aside, and a fair young girl stood where the hag had been.

"I would not play the fool again for half there is in Venice," said the lad.

"For her, Pietro," was answered in a low, musical voice.

"Ah, yes, for her. But I trust she will not need it again. If we had not fallen in with those murderous pirates that infest the coast, our father would not have been at home and Lady Aurelia obliged to go to him."

"Be thankful that he was spared, Pietro; it

frightens me to think of it. Suppose they are here to-night?"

"They dare not come so near, and if they should—" Pietro's words were cut short as the gondola shot under the balcony. Then, giving a long, low whistle, he swung himself up, and in a moment stood by the side of Lady Aurelia:

"You have waited, lady; I am sorry, but we dared not come before."

"Not long, Pietro. How did you leave your father, lad?"

"Better, and still not strong enough to venture forth; he sent me in his place to say, that he had news that pained him more than the wounds he gained in that last fray."

"I feared as much;" and tears glistened in the violet eye. "Did he see the bishop?"

"He saw the bishop, and heard from his own lips that he had no power. And, lady, my father bade me say there are spies even here. It becomes us to be on our guard; the pale of the church is no security, provided there is opposition to the papal head."

"My heart aches to think of power merged in one man, secure in what he wills."

"There seems no help for it." Then, stepping nearer: "Wilt go with me, lady? Imola came to serve thee, if she may. My father has much to say to thee."

"I will go with you, Pietro," at once adjusting her mask.

Leaving the shadow of the palace, Pietro beguiled the way with a light trilling chant, keeping time to his oars, while the masked faces behind him sat motionless, each occupied with her own thoughts. The moon hung like a silver shield in the sky, a white cloud drifted westward, and broad reaches of starry light frosted the waves.

As they made the landing in front of Filostrato's dwelling, Pietro drew his gondola under a sheltering roof, and, slipping the hook into the staple, offered his arm for support to Lady Aurelia.

It was a long, low building with a large upper room that had been open to the barba in his journeyings. To-night this room is closed, and, turning down the hall, instead of climbing the stairs, Lady Aurelia was surprised as she entered a room beautifully fitted up with furniture

which, if not entirely new, was still elegant, and so disposed that comfort and the sweet enjoyments of home-life were blended with every article. At the door the good wife came to receive them, while Filostrato, pillowed in his chair, was humble in his thanks. Then, taking from the folds of his mantle a piece of vellum, with the initial letters stained with green and red and blue, he read in snatches, commenting between the lines, sometimes with replies and sometimes without; speaking hurriedly and with evident pain by reason of his wounds. At length, folding the manuscript and replacing it carefully, he said,

"There is nothing to be gained by appealing to bishop or cardinal. Alexandrini is chief of the inquisitors. I know of but one hope, and even this may prove unavailing."

"What is it?" demanded Lady Aurelia.

"If I may be permitted to lay it before the grand patriarch of our order. I am confident, quite confident, that Count Montalto belongs to this order. If he does, surely it will belong to the order to examine into the affair. Living peacefully on his estate in Calabria, he was sud-

denly called to Rome by the authority of the Holy See, and by that authority sent on a secret mission for the church. Day after day, we are told, the Countess sent to his Holiness to learn of her husband. 'The embassy is an important one; it will require time. It is your duty to trust all to the church. When the business is accomplished the Count will return.' This is all the poor lady learns, and now she is deprived of her son, the heir of the family titles: accused of no crime, guilty of no error, save that he showed clemency, as the Count his father did, to the Vaudois."

Filostrato paused; his wounds stung him with increased pain. "Humanity," he said at length, "would lead us to do all that we are trying to do; but with this question laid before the order it would then become a duty."

"If I understand rightly, this order comprises many dignitaries and officials in the church," said Lady Aurelia.

"Truly it does," was the answer.

"I cannot deny my fears of this measure," continued the lady. "In the hands of a few tried men of our own faith it would seem to me

best, with no conflicting views, no prejudices to overcome, no conscientious scruples with regard to obedience to the higher powers, no betrayal through fear of being themselves subject to papal persecution."

"For the present it may be best," replied Filostrato with less of enthusiasm. "As soon as I am recovered of this ugly wound I will make one more attempt. If we cannot find the Count, we must, if possible, save the son. I learned to-day that Marcel had been taken to Cosenza."

"The Marquis Spinello has previously shown himself the zealous protector of the Vaudois," said Lady Aurelia. "It is possible that the Count's absence, especially if he has cause to believe, as we have, that he is a prisoner, may affect the Marquis so far as to render him severe. I trust not."

"How long before I am quite well?" asked Filostrato, turning to his wife.

"As soon as your blood runs cool, the leech said," was the reply.

"That will never be while it runs at all," returned the stricken man. "Nevertheless, I feel

myself better, and as soon as I am strong enough to use my arm I will make another journey."

"The journey is partly mine, and thus far you will permit me to bear the expense of it. Here is gold; spend it freely, but first take proper care of yourself. Make a good outfit. If you need more, let me know."

The hour was late; Lady Aurelia looked around for her guide. On a heap of scarlet cushions Pietro lay fast asleep; his brown cheek was flushed and the short, crisp curls fell negligently. The whole figure was light and graceful, and still strong and well knit.

The father saw the direction of the lady's gaze, and said,

"Pietro has learned to take rest whenever he is off duty. These days make men, although it is painful to see burdens laid on young shoulders."

The mention of his name aroused the lad; he started up suddenly:

"You are ready, lady. Pardon that I slept. Still, I feel as fresh as though it were the beginning of a new day."

"Which in truth it is. I am glad you slept,

Pietro," said the lady, smiling into the bright face of the lad.

The adieus were quickly made. Imola insisted upon going with Lady Aurelia. Late as it was, it was not too late for the revellers. Gliding into the shadow, a boat touched them, and so near as to cause the occupants to cry out, at which Pietro began to laugh and sing, as if beside himself. At this the others broke forth into a wild, boisterous laugh, and Pietro by a skilful turn of his oar slid away without molestation.

As they reached the palace the boatman lingered until he saw the signal-light from the balcony; then returned to his home to dream of the smile the lady gave him, dearer than the money with which his purse was filled.

CHAPTER XIX.

BASENESS OF LADY PORTIA AND RISALDO.

CARDINAL ALEXANDRINI so far relented after the visit of Countess Montalto that Marcel was brought from the Mamertine Prison and lodged in another of comparative comfort. Evidently, it was that he might be influenced to recant, and thus his fine genius and scholarship not be lost to the church. Books were provided, and, while his visits were restricted, he was permitted to receive—not whom he would, but those whom the pontificate thought best for him to see.

Victor was likewise kept under strict surveillance. To watch his movements, and still not to have the appearance of playing the spy, Risaldo lodged in the same house. Looked upon in some sense as a protégé of Cardinal Alexandrini, members of the college were permitted to call upon him, but always in the pres-

ence of Risaldo, who all at once professed warm friendship for his pupil, and a fear that he might find confinement irksome. The honor and zeal of the church were the standing theme of conversation.

Victor, like Marcel, did not justify persecution for conscience' sake, and he made bold to defend his position. Risaldo made no attempt to check him, but he was careful as to the listeners.

One day, in talking of Calabria and the sufferings of the people there, Victor said,

"The Vaudois have never been reformed. They are still primitive Christians, witnesses of the apostolic church."

"If the Vaudois are primitive Christians, what are we?" Risaldo asked.

"As a church we have sought out many inventions. In the first centuries of the Christian era the disciples of Christ had a unity and an independence. They were united by the same faith, but that faith was not imposed by authority upon any one."

"In all organizations and governments," Risaldo replied, "authority must be delegated to

certain persons appointed by the organization; and if any show themselves remiss or wander into byways, this authority must be used; reform must be effected; the penalty must be paid."

"But here is the very point. Each church in the time of the apostles had its own individual mode of life, just like a family—the pastor, or bishop, no more nor less than a teacher, a guide, a spiritual father," replied Victor.

"That is what our bishops claim to be," broke in Risaldo, "and if, by reason of their love and zeal for God's house, they go too far, they are still fathers."

"Fathers teach, warn, persuade, but do not drive their children to despair by torturing them, especially when they cannot accuse them of want of reverence, but merely of a desire to worship God agreeably to their own consciences."

"It is possible that a reform is necessary," replied Risaldo with apparent honesty. "This is not the time for separating from the church, however. If she is in error, we must defend her until such period as she can be purified without the loss of her power."

"If her power depends upon bloodshed, it cannot long stand; the honor that God loves does not spring from such a source."

"When heretics are obstinate, let them recant," said the priest passionately.

"To maintain a principle is not to be obstinate," persisted Victor.

"If you live longer, you will be as rampant as Marcel," returned Risaldo with evident annoyance.

"Marcel is firm where principle is concerned. In that, he is a good example to follow," answered Victor.

Risaldo did not speak for some minutes; then it was with his usual seeming candor:

"Admitting errors and desiring to reform, it is in the first place necessary that we reform ourselves, and that we know how to conform and accommodate ourselves to circumstances, and not to expose ourselves to needless peril in too sharply attacking received usages."

"Then in times of persecution you would have every one who is inclined to question freely make use of hypocritical dissimulation for the sake of not being himself suspected?"

"It would seem the only prudent way," answered the priest.

"It is said," continued Victor, "'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' Dissimulation belongs to cowardly souls, and a coward is honored neither of men nor of devils."

In justice to Risaldo, be it said, that he was faithful in carrying out the instructions received from the assumed head of the church. The Pope had said, "Be gentle with the young men; we need their scholarship." It was desirable, if possible, to save such acquirements and native genius. Turned into the right channel, they would become a power. Rome is not one to lose what she can by any possibility retain; what she cannot keep she is willing to destroy.

Lady Portia Giulia Polenta had not yet taken her vows. Soon after Marcel's arrest she came to Rome. She proposed to stop but a brief time, and her visit was of course to the Countess Montalto. With becoming tenderness she

affected to be surprised at the misfortune that had fallen on the heart of this devoted wife and mother. But then it was an honor conferred upon few; this secret mission showed the entire confidence the prelate had in the Count. Of course, he would propose no one but a tried son of the church; it was a responsible place; the business required rare powers of diplomacy, as well as time. Instead of looking backward, the Countess should look forward; much happiness awaited her on her husband's return. Of course, it was natural to feel anxious, especially as months passed and she did not hear from him. Still, there was no reason for fear; the Virgin would have him in her holy keeping; and Lady Portia Giulia went so far as to say that she would, for a suitable sum, have prayers daily offered in the convent of St. Stefano dell' Uliva for the safe return of Count Montalto.

This may have comforted the heart of the stricken woman; perhaps it did. Not in strict harmony with the church, she did not dream of leaving it. She had great regard and affection for the established creed, but she longed for reform; she desired the simplicity and purity of primi-

tive faith; she wanted the word of God to be known and honored. Above all, she prayed, that liberty might everywhere abound; she longed for the time when the fellowship of Christian hearts should be acknowledged, each heart and conscience answerable to God, and not unto man.

Lady Giulia was not long in discovering the sentiments of the Countess, and, like a faithful daughter of the Holy See, she was not long in making them known.

Lonely and sad as Isera was in the absence of her father and brothers, it was not difficult for the artful woman to win the confidence of the young girl. Her visits to Marcel and Victor were now never made alone. Lady Giulia always accompanied her. So sweet is sympathy when the heart is sorely tried! Isera was led to speak freely, and as giving vent to sorrow lightens the burden, so she felt comforted, and, by reason of this, grateful to her seeming friend.

During this time the slaughter was going on in Calabria, and although reports seldom reached them, and never in their true form, still,

there was enough to call for indignation and outspoken words on the part of the Countess and Isera. In prison, Marcel could only show his interest, while Victor was exasperated, and made bold to say so, let who would hear him.

"A dangerous family," Risaldo said as he listened to Lady Giulia. "They are heretics to the backbone. There is no use; the Evil One has them already in his keeping."

"Untie the bundle and the twigs are easily broken," was Lady Giulia's smiling suggestion.

"The knot is slipped," returned Risaldo with a shrug; "there is no need to do anything rash, however; the bundle is safe where it is. You would say a twig at a time, I suppose?"

"I said it would be the easier way," was the careless reply.

"Business that I am heartily sick of. Just as though they are a whit better than the herd in Calabria! By the way, the work is going on well in that quarter; between the Cardinal and the Viceroy, it will not take an age to thin them off."

"Sorry business!" echoed Lady Giulia with a countenance that left no room to mistake her

words as other than ironical—"sorry business! Still, the supremacy of the church must be upheld. To spare any of them would be like cutting down old shoots and leaving the root to spring up with more strength and beauty. I am sorry, very sorry, but they brought it upon themselves."

Whether Lady Giulia's suggestion tended to hasten on the end, or whether the fact that Risaldo was heartily tired of the business led to a change in the mind of the Cardinal, we find that, with another attempt to win over Marcel, in which the offer of a Cardinal's hat was held up in the distance, and ineffectual to dazzle the eyes of the conscientious youth, it was resolved to spend no more time in persuasion.

"I call upon you all to witness I have done what I can," said Cardinal Alexandrini. "Take him to Cosenza; still, be merciful. Do not rack him to the death; at least, not till his obstinacy renders every other course impracticable."

To the Countess the version was altogether different.

"I am instructed by Cardinal Alexandrini to

say that, as time passes and the Count does not return, the Holy Office has thought it expedient to send another embassy, and who more fitting to undertake it than his son?" said Risaldo with a voice and look of sympathy. "Accordingly, Marcel will set forth this evening. If you would like to see him before he goes, permit me to attend you this very hour."

"Can you inform me where he is going?" asked the Countess, her eyes brimming with tears. "Surely his mother should know in what direction and how far her child is to go from her."

"The negotiations are of the utmost importance to the church, and at present are secret," was said in the same stealthy voice. "That Marcel will be near his father, perhaps under the same roof, will be sufficient comfort, especially when he is at present not under yours."

"How comes it that the Cardinal has changed his mind? There was a time when he was disposed to be very harsh with Marcel."

"You call it by too hard a name," interposed Risaldo. "The Cardinal has always expressed himself tenderly. He values talent and ability,

and, valuing Marcel highly, he is anxious that in every respect he should be one with whom the honor of the church could be safely trusted."

"Is it so? Does the Cardinal really feel that he is no longer an object of suspicion?" asked the Countess in an excited tone.

"It would seem so. Indeed, I have heard it affirmed, that he considered Marcel well fitted to share in the important trust with which his father was invested. But time flies, my lady. If you will go, we may as well set forth at once."

Lady Giulia, with Isera and Victor, made their way to the palace-prison, where Marcel waited instructions, Risaldo said.

"With your leave I would see my son alone for a few minutes," the Countess said to Cardinal Alexandrini, who was likewise present.

"That will be impossible," replied the Cardinal with a suavity of manner perfectly his own. "Do not take leave of your son as though you are never to see him again. He goes to rejoin the Count. Let your words be cheerful in view of this."

In the mean time, Risaldo and Lady Giulia

kept up a spirited conversation, in which they compelled both Victor and Isera to take a part, and before the Countess or Isera found a moment in which to speak in confidence to Marcel the Cardinal signified that the audience was at an end. With suppressed tears the adieus were made, Marcel holding his mother to his heart, commending her to God, and whispering farewell with a tenderness the memory of which would never leave her. He took leave of Isera and Victor in the same manner, and as they turned from the door for one more look, the deathly pallor of his face and the strange light in his eyes told that he felt it was for the last time. Risaldo caught the expression, and, urging them on, closed the door behind him.

That night the Countess woke in agony. "Such a dream! such a dream as I have had!" she exclaimed as her cries brought Isera and Lady Giulia to her bedside.—"I saw plainly the pale, haggard face of your father, child. He is in prison, and that is where they have taken Marcel."

"Surely this cannot be. My father has not even been accused; how, then, can he be in

prison? It was but a dream, dear mother; do not think of it again;" and Isera smoothed the burning forehead and pressed kisses upon the trembling lips.

"But I saw him, child. He turned his eyes upon me pleadingly. I cannot forget it."

"It is but natural," chimed in Lady Giulia. "You give too many of your thoughts by day to this subject. You have so much pity, so much sympathy for the unfortunate! Would it not be better, dear Countess, to think more of the honor and permanency of the church, the brightness that is sure to follow this clearance of heresy and false creeds? Meditate upon the triumph of the faithful, rather than upon the suffering of apostates, to whom the gate of mercy is already shut."

"Mercy and pardon are a free gift. How can the gate be shut?" murmured the Countess.

Lady Giulia did not seem to heed the observation, but bathed the head of the sufferer with her cool fingers, and did not offer to stir until she saw the Countess in a seemingly quiet slumber.

After this the dream was not touched upon,

but it was plain the Countess had received a shock from which she could not rally.

"You must have change; you must go to the baths," said Risaldo as he looked into the white face of the sufferer.

"If I could prevail upon the Countess to go with me to St. Stefano dell' Uliva!" said Lady Giulia. "It is so pleasant, so desirable there; none of the distractions of the world, the noise and commotion, the rumors that fill the soul with heaviness. All is peace; a divine joy, a celestial music, setting all the springs of life in motion. And her movements would be quite free there, quite free," looking into the face of Risaldo.

"Now I think of it, just the spot for you, my lady," said the priest. "It may be months before the Count and Marcel will return; in that interval your health will be built up; and, as Lady Giulia says, your movements there will be quite free."

"It matters little for myself," returned the Countess, "but for Isera and Victor, St. Stefano would prove a dull resort. Besides, it is very unhealthy."

"Unhealthy! Ah, that was centuries ago, when it was only a colony of the Sabines. Unhealthy! I assure you the Romans considered it a very healthy place; they sent their gladiators there to be trained and exercised."

"It would, no doubt, be best to leave Victor in Rome, where he could be favorably circumstanced with regard to his future. Just consider, dear Countess, the advantage! He will be continually under the supervision of the Holy Father himself; but few, comparatively few, could hope for this benefit. And for Isera, the world has not a more charming retreat; besides, the child loves quiet. Only yesterday I heard her sighing for the dear Calabrian home. It was lovely; I quite entered into her feelings. But in St. Stefano she will find it all, with the advantage of living and breathing in the almost divine atmosphere of the place."

"We will think of it," said the Countess with a sigh. "It is a grievous thing for a mother to be parted from her children."

CHAPTER XX.

CHRISTINA AND CHAFFREY DISCOVER MARCEL'S PRISON.

WHILE these things were transpiring in Rome, the fair fields of Calabria were drenched with the blood of Christians. By their zeal to have a stated pastorate they had stirred their enemies to a devouring hate. As we have seen, Paschal met with an early death, and Andrea, with three others of the leading men in counsel, perished on the hill Moran. Of Marquet's fate, they were not certain. Only this, that after the rescue and the supposed escape he was retaken and treated with still greater rigor, and at last removed, it was said, to another prison. The only remaining son of a leading family, Antoine became at once an object of suspicion. Seldom did he venture forth that he was not threatened.

"Why, what have I done?" he would ask, looking into the faces of his accusers.

"It is not necessary that you do anything; your father has done enough. Accursed family! If you are suffered to live, you will be just such another."

"I trust so," was the inarticulate reply; but Antoine was too prudent to put himself within the grasp of his foes.

In the hour of their need Christina showed the confidence she had in the divine protection and power. Entering her mother's room one evening, she begged her to permit Antoine to go to Geneva. "If he stays here, he will doubtless die like the rest. If he goes, God will be with him by the way, and deliver him if it pleases him so to do."

"But Antoine is so young! If he goes, you must accompany him, child."

"If we could all go! But your strength does not warrant this. Be persuaded, dear mother. Let Antoine go without us."

"Alas! If Count Montalto were only here, they would not dare. Why does he stay away? It is not possible that he has turned against us?"

"Chaffrey thinks—" but Christina stopped suddenly."

"What is it that Chaffrey thinks, child?"

"He thinks it possible that the Count may be a prisoner."

"Did we not hear that he was called to Rome, and his family with him? This does not look like being a prisoner."

"With all of this, I have good reason to believe that he is not there, and Marcel is likewise under restraint," returned Christina.

"Do you mean to say that Marcel is a prisoner?" asked the mother in an excited tone.

"As good as a prisoner, Chaffrey says, although he is lodged in a palace."

"Is it so? and I have blamed them for not coming to our rescue!"

Tears streamed over the mother's face; Christina trembled like an aspen. The door opened and a young, boyish figure entered. Flinging aside a sack of meal, he dropped by the side of his mother and hid his face on her knee:

"Oh, mother, it is dreadful! I cannot bear it! They have taken away Marquet, and my father they have put to death; there are none to show us pity, none to whom we can go for help."

"God is with us;" and Christina came and

knelt down beside her brother, and put her arms around his neck and lifted his head to her bosom. "You are young, Antoine; you must go from us. Look up and ask mother to give you her blessing."

"Where can we go, Christina?"

"Only you must go, Antoine."

"Where?"

"To Geneva. You will carry the faith, Antoine, and by and by you will do a man's work for Christ."

"That is a tedious journey. How am I to find the way? Besides, I cannot leave you and mother."

"If you stay, you cannot profit us. Our father was a leading man, and Marquet was plain-spoken."

"And, for that matter, so am I," looking up proudly. "Let them kill me, if they will. I cannot go without you."

"God will be with you by the way, Antoine. Can you not go for the sake of the truth? What profit to suffer here, in comparison with the good of proclaiming Christ in the years to come?"

"You are right, sister; God can show me the way, and he can take care of you and mother here. When shall I depart?"

"To-night; and I will go with you as far as I may, and return before daylight."

"Ought I to ask it?"

"I should not be happy without it. And now we must hasten. Such things as you can carry by the way you must have. But first let us ask God's blessing upon the undertaking," Christina answered.

When it became known that one had gone, others made ready to follow; even the leaders of the Vaudois, in order to stay blood, proposed to leave the country.

"If we may not be permitted to profess the faith of our fathers in peace in these countries which we have rendered fertile, we offer to leave them and retire into another country," they said.

"You will only go to sow the poison of your heresy," was the reply. "No mercy for the rebels! Recant or die!" and the slaughter was renewed with increased fury.

Every day and hour Christina grew more and

more anxious to save, if possible, the young men, going herself to them and stimulating them to make the attempt to escape.

"But if they find us and bring us back, they will deal with us without mercy."

"They will do this if you stay," came calmly.

"Are you not afraid to be left behind?" was asked, "especially if it should become known that you influence us to do what we can to elude them?"

"They can but put me to death, but if you and Antoine can escape to tell the truth in other portions of the country, it will help me to bear the torture."

"Why not come with us?"

"My mother cannot bear the journey."

On one of these excursions, seeing her worn with fatigue and anxiety, Chaffrey prevailed upon Christina to partake of the hospitality of his house, and to ensure present safety walked with her, turning into a covered path that led through the castle-grounds of Montalto. As they drew near, the sight of the desolate place caused tears to flow.

"It was once so happy here, and now, alas!

nothing but ruin, decay, and death!" said Christina, sinking down upon a bench on the walk. A puff of wind drifted through the orange trees, and a shower of perfumed leaves fell at her feet. The sight caused her to weep only the more. Looking over the velvet slope, she almost fancied she could see Marcel walking up and down with his book under his arm or half open, while Victor tossed bright words, and Isera and Caia danced through the rose-fringed walks.

"What a change in a few brief months! And what gain for all this?" was added with more of energy.

A bird fluttered in the boughs overhead. Christina started; she was conscious of having spoken aloud. Possibly the house was not quite forsaken; possibly her enemies were lurking among the trees of the garden. But no; even Chaffrey was not there. Dashing the tears from her long lashes, she hastened along the path, now thoroughly alarmed. Could it be that she was left alone? And was the castle really deserted?

Approaching the main entrance, she saw Chaffrey coming out of the shadow. He held

a fragment of paper in his hand, and he beckoned her to draw near.

"What is it, Chaffrey? what have you found? For mercy's sake, let us go! I am frightened. Surely there must be some one here, and if so, it must be one of our foes."

The paper was rumpled and yellow, with "Marcel" written in a bold hand. Then followed a few verses from the evangelist: "And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"It looks like a leaf recently torn from a volume Marcel used to study. Yes, it must be," Christina said, turning her tearful gaze to Chaffrey's face.

"I have not heard of any one being here for months," answered Chaffrey as he scanned the leaf closely. "As you say, it looks as though

not long since torn from its place. Let us examine the grounds more closely."

"I am half afraid," trembled on the white lips.

"I am on business connected with the Marquis Spinello," Chaffrey answered promptly.

The luxurious growth of tangled vines obstructed their way, and effectually hid from view the balcony on which Christina had last seen the Countess and Isera. Putting aside the rank growth with their hands, they came to a winding staircase that communicated directly with the room where the family were accustomed to pass their mornings. The door was closed, and, sitting down on the stairs, Christina's thoughts wandered back to the time when she was last there. Then, all was life and motion; now, all gloom and desolation. Oppressed with these thoughts, she was startled by a low, deep moan, as of one in great distress. Chaffrey was not far distant. Did he hear it? Again the moan, and this time it seemed nearer. Was it possible that any one was still there?

In her terror Christina seized hold of the balustrade. As she did so, she caught the glis-

tening of the sun's rays reflected from a barred window below. A sudden cry brought Chaffrey to the place:

"List! Do you not hear it? Surely there is somebody in the castle, and this somebody is sick and suffering. Again it comes to me. Do you not hear it?"

"I hear a moan," replied Chaffrey, listening attentively.

"There is a window; into what does it open?" asked Christina, her face grave in sympathy for the sufferer.

A quick light shot into Chaffrey's eyes. He remembered to have heard there were vaults under the castle where prisoners of state had once been lodged. Immediately he began to pull away the tangle of vines and loose leaves. The entrance of light showed a network of strong iron rods fastened firmly in the wall. With all his strength he shook them. There was no visible tremor, but the moan was nearer: "Water! water! Will no one give me water?"

"Merciful heavens! it is the Count's voice!" ejaculated Chaffrey, staggering against the wall. Christina fell on her knees paralyzed.

"Put your ear to the opening and listen," whispered Chaffrey.

"I hear a moan like one in torment, but no words. If it is the Count or Marcel, we must get to him;" and Christina endeavored with her puny strength to shake the bars.

As she did so a bit of dry mortar fell inward with a sharp, tinkling sound, as though falling on a metallic substance. The unusual sound, together with the light admitted into the cell, had the effect to arouse the sufferer. "Water! water! will no one give me water?" was again heard.

Putting his lips to the grating, Chaffrey whispered in a low, penetrating tone, "Count Montalto!"

There was a shuffling sound, as though the prisoner were trying to crawl nearer to the window, and the clanking of fetters on the stone flooring.

"Water! water! If you are one who ever cared for Marcel, give him water," came in gasps. Then there was a moan, and after that silence. Had he fainted?

The thought was terrible. It was Marcel!

Perhaps he was dead. Once more Chaffrey whispered through the cold bars,

"Can you exert yourself still more? Can you reach a small bottle if I let it down?"

There was a sound; he was not dead.

"Fortunately, I have one in my pocket, if we can find water," turning to Christina.

"Make haste; give it to me. I remember a cool spring with a marble cover where I once went with Isera," holding forth her hand.

With quick steps Christina started for water, her heart giving up thanks, and still trembling, lest in the rank growth she should lose her waymarks. "Even here I may ask him;" and, dropping on her knees, she asked with the freedom of a child to be led in the right path. Then rising, she pursued her way.

"Surely this must be the spot," she said, coming to a thick grove of acacia trees.

In such a bewildering maze of undergrowth it seemed hardly probable that she could find the place, and if she did, would not the spring be dry? Ashamed of her doubt when once she had asked for guidance, Christina knelt and began to scrape away the dried leaves.

Indications of moisture made her confident that water must be near. Searching for a half hour, and led still farther on by the deeper green of the leaves, she came to the spring, bursting from a rock, with a thin ripple of a stream flowing down through the grasses. Quietly filling the small bottle, she hastened back.

"I was long in finding it, but now is it possible for him to reach it?" giving the tiny draught to Chaffrey.

"God be praised! he has revived a little. But quick! we must be gone. Occasionally some one comes, he says. At first it was every day; recently he has been left several days together."

By this time a cord was attached to the bottle, and it was put between the bars.

"Thank God, it is thus far well!" whispered Chaffrey, holding on to the line.

"Thank God!" came feebly through the bars, and again the empty vial came up; the second time it was filled with water and swung down safely.

The sun was nearing the horizon, and Christina had a long walk before her.

Montalto.

Page 214.

"We must not linger," said Chaffrey; "besides, if we would release him, we must be cautious."

A few kind words were whispered down to Marcel, a few murmured snatches came up to them. Then, replacing the leaves and tangled vines, they set forth on separate routes, thankful that God had shown them the prison where Marcel was confined, and still turning in their minds by what means they could best release him, and where to place him should they succeed.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARCEL DELIVERED FROM THE DUNGEON

THERE was no sleep for Christina and her mother that night, and the morning found her early at the place where she promised to meet Chaffrey. This time she had bread and a flat bottle of fresh milk.

"We must be cautious," whispered Chaffrey, who, from being a loyal vassal of Spinello, had the advantage of knowing much that was going on. "If it is, as I surmise, that they have left him to starve to death, only coming at intervals with food, so as to make it a lingering torture, then we must be watchful, lest they surprise us."

"If I might go with the bread and milk!" suggested Christina. "He is so weak! I could not sleep for thinking that he might die in the night; and only as I asked God to keep him and give him to lie in Antoine's bed, did I feel

comfort. Only say I may go, Chaffrey! God will help us; I have asked him."

"If it be his will; and I have to think of it every day. There is so much wrong-doing, and he suffers it," was the rejoinder.

"I will be very cautious, and you will come afterward. If we can but weaken the window!" said Christina as she picked up her bag and slipped away into the shadow of the wood.

Chaffrey had not been idle during the night, but there were few he could trust; and if Marcel was there, the Count was not likely to be far off. He had heard it discussed by the Marquis and his friends, and he knew the mission was secret on which Count Montalto had been sent. "Doubtless this was the end of it," he said meditatively, and then devised means whereby he could enter the castle and search for himself. The good wife entered into his plans, and under the appearance of gathering simples kept watch at the castle-gate.

What strength could not accomplish was effected by strategy. A small stream that ran under the vaults of the castle was turned so that the waters dried up, and through this open-

ing an entrance was made, and the prisoner, in an almost dying condition, was conveyed to Christina's home.

When questioned by Chaffrey with regard to the Count, Marcel said he was not there, but had died at Cosenza. Then, speaking of himself,

"It was their purpose to send me to Calabria with power to put to death every heretic, and when I refused they arrested me. Finding that torture, and even death on the rack, would not move me to so horrible a deed, they determined to imprison me, and leave me to a lingering death in my own castle."

So weak that he could hardly speak, still it was music to Christina's heart. Racked and broken as his body was, there was hope that God would raise him up. Running back in thought over the weeks, she saw a Father's loving hand in all the way. Twice she had heard from Antoine and the young men who went after him. And now Marcel is in Antoine's bed, and good nursing will not be wanting, and with God's blessing he may escape.

"Do not comfort thyself overmuch," said the mother. "The poor youth has suffered so much

that his greatest enemy would not know him. It is hardly possible he can survive."

"If God wills, mother; and I have asked him."

Christina's sweet faith and constancy rendered her cheerful in spite of the dark days that followed. More than once her persecutors had come to her humble home, but she was so meek and quiet, sitting at her wheel seemingly unmindful of everything without, that they could hardly make it appear that she was the same maiden who had stirred up the young men to leave the country. So, with a few questions, simply answered, they returned, leaving her and her mother without molestation.

Meanwhile, Christina comforted Marcel by reading portions from the evangelists and from Paul's Epistles, singing the old songs and talking in low tones of Isera and Victor. Sometimes Chaffrey came, but not frequently. "Suspicion is already aroused," he said one day, "and I feel that the Marquis has his eye upon me. Nevertheless, I am but an old tree; gladly would I give my life for the young sapling," with a look toward Marcel.

"The young sapling will never become an old tree; it is already shorn of its promised strength," came slowly.

"But if God wills, you shall live and carry his truth to other countries," said Christina.

"His word will not perish; for every drop of blood shed a living church will spring up." Then in a lower tone, "No, Christina, I am not afraid to die, but dread the suffering in store for my mother and Isera, and for Victor. They will rack his body, poor boy! Pray for him, Christina, that his faith may not fail."

"I have thought sometimes, if Lady Aurelia knew of our state, she would help us. But Venice is so far away!" clasping her hands convulsively.

"Heaven is so near!" whispered Marcel. After a pause, in which his lips moved in prayer, he said, "Read to me, Christina; it is the only ease I get in my pain."

Christina read: "'Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' 'Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.' 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised

from the dead according to my gospel.' 'Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.' 'It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.' 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' 'And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.'"

The sufferer was asleep. Did he breathe? Chaffrey bowed his head to see: "Poor youth! there is comfort in store for thee, and rest."

Christina drew near. The expression of peace on the white, wasted face called for gratitude. "He was so wise and good! how could

they bear to rack him so?" raising her eyes to Chaffrey.

"May God pardon them! I cannot," ejaculated Chaffrey; then, melting into tears, "Jesus prayed for his murderers, and so must we if we would be like him."

Christina followed him to where her mother was preparing something for the sufferer to eat.

"You remember the merchant-vessels we used to see as we played on the slope before the castle? Is there no way to watch for them?"

"And thus excite our enemies to do their worst?" asked Chaffrey.

"Could we but send Lady Aurelia word, I feel sure she could devise some means," pleaded Christina.

"Already we are daring too much. I am afraid lest they should track him from the dungeon where they left him to die alone," said Chaffrey, looking back to the room where Marcel was lying asleep.

"True. I am thankful for this; but only think, if we could save him to the world! He

so wise in books and so well fitted to proclaim the truth!"

"You mean he *was?*"

"The more sorrow to see him lying as he now lies, bereft of all that made him superior to other men. And still I love to think, if it is best, God will prepare a way."

"Your faith strengthens mine. Powerful as our enemies are, God can overthrow their evil designs, and provide a way of escape if it seems to him good. We will ask him, bearing in our hands the promise to two or three."

"Enough, good Chaffrey—as God wills," Christina said reverently.

The next moment she held a bowl of some savory liquid in her hand, ready to tempt the sufferer when he should awaken.

CHAPTER XXII.

FILOSTRATO AND HIS POLACCA.

THE terrace of Landino Palace, with its pomegranate and acacia trees, looked upon the sea. The sleeping waters reflected the color of the sky, and the foliage glistened with pearly drops reflected through a soft lavender light, only seen in early morning.

A neat and trim polacca stood into shore, ready, it would seem, to drop her anchor, but still delaying. On the terrace a man was walking up and down, now gazing seaward and now raising his eyes to the palace-windows, seemingly careless, yet still keenly alive to every sound and movement. His black hat, tied with silver cord and tassels, shaded a face singularly mild and gentle, with large, dark eyes full of intelligence, and brows delicately pencilled. The lower part of his face was hidden in a beard profuse, but not long.

With an easy dignity of motion that betrayed her station a lady emerged from the sculptured archway. Early as it was, her dress was carefully adjusted. A long, flowing skirt, caught over her left arm, revealed slippers daintily embroidered with seed-pearls, and she wore a jacket of green velvet with slashed sleeves, looped with strings of pearls. Her superb hair was half concealed by a velvet cap of the same color, with a long white plume that fell gracefully over her right shoulder.

With a low bow the man paused in his walk:

"It is early, my lady, but I could not leave without seeing you, and the craft is ready. You have the news that Jacopo brought?"

"I have it, and I must say that it did not so much surprise me; my heart had whispered it before."

"Do you suppose that the Marquis Spinello is aware of the calamity that has befallen Count Montalto and his family?"

"I cannot think that he knows it fully; and still, should he interfere, their fate would be the same."

"Would you advise me to see him?"

"Jacopo says it will be well for you only to run near shore; a boat will be in readiness."

"You are considerate. I trust success awaits us, and if it does—"

"You will bring Marcel here, provided it is in your power."

"Pietro says that some of the Marquis's own people have imbibed the faith of the Vaudois."

"Some of its firmest adherents belong to his estates," answered Lady Aurelia.

"Then he must be oblivious."

"Whatever course the Marquis may be constrained to pursue, his heart is with his people; I am sure of it," continued the lady, her beautiful eyes brimming with tears.

"Have you intelligence of the Countess and Isera?" was asked briefly.

"When you meet Chaffrey he will possibly have some statement to make concerning them. At present we only know that Marcel is with the Vaudois Christina and her mother. Would that you could bring them all! Still, we are not absolutely secure. I tremble when I remember that my mother does not even know of what we are thinking."

"It is a cruel business, and God grant us his help!"

"In him is our only hope," echoed the lady, giving her hand at parting.

Filostrato—for the commander of the polacca was no other—was a seafaring man. For years he had been in the habit of coasting along the shore as far down as Brindisi, Tarento, and Messina. Freighted with the rich goods of Venetian looms, he brought back wool, honey, and rosin, together with the celebrated purple dye, and not unfrequently paintings and statues of famous Greek artists of centuries before.

The pale violet tint of early morning was succeeded by a golden light. The air came fresh and beautiful; small boats began to dance on the jewelled waters: the palace was astir. With a last long look at the receding polacca, Lady Aurelia disappeared in the shadow of the arch.

A favorable breeze enabled the crew of the polacca to crowd on all sail.

Hours passed. The sun sank below the purple horizon; the water was dimpled with stars. Ravenna was asleep; there was small profit to

enter at this hour, and, running out to sea to avoid the pestiferous air of the place, there was a breathing-time for Filostrato and his crew.

Wrapping his cloak around him, the captain of the ship looked over the blue waters toward the city of Honorius and Odoacer, and later of Cæsar with his eye fixed on the Rubicon, the crossing of which was to plunge the world in civil strife. Back through the centuries he pictured to himself the warrior-statesman parleying with the Senate, and the jealous eye with which he regarded Picenum—not so much to become the possessor of that rich and populous country as to deprive Pompey of the resources he naturally expected to find in a province devoted to his interests, and in which he could cause legions to spring up by merely stamping on the ground with his foot.

"Gone! gone!" he exclaimed, springing up and walking rapidly the deck. "Change is written upon everything but the heavens; there is no change with God." Lifting his eyes to the stars, he said, "God holds them, and still how many to-night are shut up in horrid dungeons, deprived of the privilege of feasting their eyes

on this splendid vault—deprived of liberty, and soon to be deprived of life!"

Filostrato's steps grew slower; his breathing was troubled; he could not rest. Drawing his cherished manuscript from his bosom, he read Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Comforted by the love and tenderness of God, so clearly made known by the apostle, he was about to resign himself to sleep when the watch suddenly cried out that a small boat was beating about on the sea, as if to run them down.

Filostrato gazed for a time at it, and ordered out his own boat and made toward the other, thinking it contained some one needing help.

In the bottom of the boat lay a man whose shaven head and cowl proclaimed him a monk. His hands and arms were bound closely to his body with small cords that cut into the flesh. His shoulders were gashed, and he was apparently near to death. Scarcely able to speak, he at length told them not to be alarmed, and not to exert themselves too much to save him. "I am not a malefactor, although I have the appearance of being one. Whatever your creed, I pray you to have compassion upon my neces-

sity, and let my last moments be free from further torture."

With this effort the eyes of the monk closed, and he whispered a prayer, the name of Jesus alone being audible. The hearts of the crew were touched with pity. They lifted him into their vessel, and Filostrato fell upon his knees beside the sufferer:

"My brother, we have no desire to torture; we are of one faith; the Jesus whom you worship is our all-atoning Saviour."

"Who says that?" asked the monk, making an attempt to rise.

"We all say it. You are among friends, my brother."

He was conveyed safely on board Filostrato's vessel, and kindly cared for. The next morning they entered the harbor of Ravenna.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHRISTINA VISITS MARCEL'S EMPTY DUNGEON.

CHRISTINA whispered the news to her mother, then smoothed her brown hair, and sat down just where she could catch the first sound if the sufferer should waken and call. All the time it ran through her brain like a strain of sweet music: "Jacopo is on his way to Venice, and God will keep him." For days she had thought of it, and longed so much to send some word to Lady Aurelia. Chaffrey had at first dissuaded her, saying there was danger to herself, and that it was not likely that Marcel could be moved.

"But he is stronger; I can perceive it," pleaded the maiden.

Chaffrey was touched: "You make me feel that my faith is weak, child. I aim to trust, and, my faith failing, I question. Can it well

be done? God's power, however, is over all, and he can blind our enemies to what we do as easily as he could close the lions' mouths when Daniel was shut in."

And now Jacopo is on his way, and Christina leans her head back against the wall with a grateful feeling of rest. She does not doubt but God will do it. How, she does not know, but she has asked him, and, having asked, she feels that she must wait. Drawing near the couch, she lays her hands on the poor shattered wrist, not yet free from the print of the galling chain. The fever-flush has left the cheek, and the pulse is calm and feeble as that of a little child. A moment she gazes into the white, thin face, while a holy ardor kindles in her soul. His suffering is a witness of his faith in the gospel, the seal of his love for his Saviour.

A step was heard outside. The poor girl started; it was not her habit to show anything unusual in her face when a neighbor came in. Schooling herself, therefore, she went out, to find a poor woman whose husband, a retainer of Count Montalto, had already

suffered death on the charge of being one of the Vaudois.

"I have just heard that the Count is dead and his family all imprisoned for heresy," she remarked.

"That does not agree with what was said at the time," returned Christina.

"What was that?" asked the woman.

"That Count Montalto was called to Rome for the purpose of being sent on a secret mission connected with the church."

This woman had urged her husband to recant rather than to suffer death. Thus Christina felt she could not trust her with the secret that weighed so heavily on her heart. Even Antoine's absence was not touched upon. Perhaps she did not know that he was gone; or, knowing, was so pressed down by high-handed wrong that she was afraid to ask after him.

"It is said strict search will be made for all the sacred books, and when gathered a bonfire will be made in the public square," she said at length.

"In that case we shall be glad we learned them all by heart," returned Christina.

Winding the distaff with the silken flax, the good housewife called the visitor's attention to the glittering skeins on the wall: "It keeps our hands busy and our thoughts more at home."

"Is that the reason you have shown so little interest in outward things of late?" with a questioning glance at Christina's face.

"These are not times to tempt one from one's home," was the brief reply.

"And yet 'tis said that Chaffrey is often here," persisted the woman.

"Chaffrey was my father's friend. True, he has sometimes come this way. The Marquis Spinello trusts Chaffrey with the control of many things," was said indifferently.

The bare mention of the Marquis's name had the effect to put an end to the painful questioning. Her errand done, the woman went her way, leaving Christina and her mother to question if the visit were not at the instigation of lying spies, thinking that through a show of sympathy something might be learned upon which to fasten an accusation.

"It becomes us to be prudent," said the mother in a submissive tone.

"Prudent, but not cringing. God can protect us if he please, dear mother."

"I know, child, but your father was not spared, neither was Marquet. And Antoine, my precious boy! my baby! where is he to-night?" cried the mother, her white lips trembling.

"In God's most holy keeping. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice, and are not we in his sight of more value than sparrows, dear mother?"

"I try to think so," struggling with the tears.

"We will not distrust him, mother. My father met a quick death, without torture; let us be thankful."

With this Christina slipped through the door into Marcel's room. He was already awake.

"I feel much stronger," he said with an expression so like the old days that tears came into Christina's eyes. "I had such sweet sleep, and in my dream some one came to me and touched me on the lips, and breathed into my nostrils the breath of life. I feel a newness of life—a life no longer like the old life, but devoted to the glory of God."

During all these days Christina did not think it expedient to speak of the hope in her heart that Jacopo would finally succeed in reaching Venice, and that Lady Aurelia Landino would make haste to send a vessel in which Marcel could be safely taken. Sometimes her mother was fearful, and she was troubled lest Chaffrey should be suspected, but for herself there was no fear. "What is my death," she said in reply to her mother, "if Marcel is spared to preach the gospel?"

"Do you not care to leave your mother in her old age, child?"

"God will hold you in his right hand, dear mother."

Thus strengthened by her simple faith, and nerved through her confidence in God, Christina watched by day, and at night looked out over the sea for a sail, missing Jacopo, and not less Chaffrey, whom she would not have come too frequently to visit them.

Going through the castle-grounds one evening, and impelled by some lingering recollection of days when she had been there with her father, Christina struck into a path that led to-

ward a ruined temple standing in a grove of acacia and myrtle trees. Flinging herself down on the velvet turf near the temple, she let her thoughts wander, recalling all the incidents connected with a spot that had once seemed to her a place of enchantment. Here Isera sat and dreamed of all that she would do for a people whose simple faith in the gospel of Christ impressed her with a beauty and fitness for all human and spiritual need not found in the gorgeous ceremonials of her own church. Alas, for human plans and men's devices! Everything was changed! The walks were hedged up, and ruin and dismay haunted the spot. Persecution had done its work, and the once happy family were doomed to torture and the stake. And all this in the name and under the veil of the religion of Christ! "Is it possible," exclaimed Christina, "that God can approve—that he can look down upon his suffering children and not strike their enemies with sudden terror in view of what they have done?"

A bird fluttered in the branches overhead and a dead leaf rustled to the mossy carpet. Christina started up, then shrank closer to the earth

as two men passed so near that she could almost have touched them with her hand. Absorbed, they did not notice her hiding-place, and did not surmise there was a human ear to hear them.

"Dead men tell no tales; there is no doubt of it," said one. "Better die than live and do mischief, as he would be sure to have done."

"But why not go into the cell and see if it is not that he is obstinate and will not answer?" asked the other.

"To tell the truth, I could not bear to see him starved to death. He was my pupil, and I loved him for his manly ways and studious habits. But when he set up his own opinions against the church, I had to nerve my heart against him. He was a heretic, and as a heretic he has suffered."

Christina had only a passing glimpse of the two faces, but she was sure one was Risaldo. Evidently, they had come from the castle, and their words referred to Marcel. They took it for granted that he was dead, starved to death; that was the punishment intended.

"God held him back," she softly whispered;

"let us be thankful. Had he unlocked the prison-cell and found the victim had escaped, search would doubtless have been made in all our homes."

Much as Christina would have liked to learn more of the family, she dared not stir from the spot until long after the voices had died away. Leaving her lair, she made her way stealthily to the steps leading to the balcony from which she had seen the window that opened into Marcel's dungeon. Evidently, the vines had not been disturbed. The channel of the stream by which entrance had been effected and the prisoner rescued was still dry. Hesitating a moment, she resolved to explore the passage; possibly another victim had been placed there. Throwing herself against the sliding gate, it did not move. Again and again she gathered all her strength for the onset. With naked hands she grasped the bars and tried to slip them through the rusty groove. At length she succeded sufficiently to crowd her body through the aperture. A faint light at the entrance only made the darkness perceptible. The walls were damp and covered with green mould; the air was poi-

sonous with death-dealing gases; the pavement was slimy with dirt and filth. With difficulty she found her way to the vaults that had been used for prisoners.

Chaffrey had taken the precaution to close the door of Marcel's cell. Standing on tiptoe, she endeavored to look in. A thin ray of light sifted in through the window and threw its brightness on its stony roof, but revealed nothing below. Pressing her ear to the damp bars, she tried to listen. She could hear nothing but her own heart-beats. The terrible silence awed her. Risaldo thought of Marcel as lying there cold and dead. A sickening sensation crept over her; she put out her hands to steady herself. How was it possible for Marcel to keep his reason? Even there in the solitude God was with him, and sent him deliverance. The thought gave her courage. Feeling her way along the wall, she found the entrance just as the sun went down. To be seen by any one with blood-stained hands and torn garments would lead to suspicion. Finding the spring from which she had brought water, she washed her hands and face and adjusted her

dress. Neither was she too soon. At the castle-gate a stranger met her, but, seeing only a simple maiden, he passed on, leaving her to go home unmolested.

Joan met her child in tears: "I was fearful some evil had befallen you."

"I asked God to guide me, mother, and it has been to our profit. I shall not now feel so troubled in thinking of Marcel. I have seen Risaldo, and he is convinced that his pupil was starved to death in the vaults of his own castle."

"May God pardon him! I fear I cannot," exclaimed Joan.

"Dear mother, except we forgive, we cannot hope to be forgiven."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RESCUE OF THE COUNTESS MONTALTO AND ISERA.

THE monk revived under the treatment of his new friends. Once again at sea, they brought his couch upon the deck, and listened as he spoke in fragments, and were awed into grateful silence as he gave his name, Fra Geoffrey, whose brother had so lately given up his life in Rome rather than deny his faith.

Born in Piedmont and educated for the ministry, Fra Geoffrey entered the monastery of Monte Fiascone. Here it became needful for him to examine into the disquietude that stirred so many minds—an inclination and a willingness to question, which the Holy See was endeavoring to put down. With a companion he visited the different cities of Italy, spending some weeks in Calabria, mingling freely with the people, studying their views and their man-

ner of life. The consequence was that the more he studied to refute the doctrine of the Vaudois, the more was he convinced that it was his own church that had departed. The word of God was given as a guide; how could it become a guide when it was forbidden to the people?

Suspected of an inclination in favor of the doctrines which he was appointed to combat, he was called to Rome. Before the Pope he vindicated his position with a boldness that up to this time was unknown even to himself. Exasperated, the pontiff commanded him to be cast into prison. Strange to relate, books were allowed him, and these, studied with ardor, had the effect to deepen the impression already made upon his mind. Again was he called to answer before the Holy See, and again did he speak with more boldness than at first. Reprimanding him severely, the Pope ordered him to be sent as a prisoner from Rome. To his questions there was no response. They travelled for days, hardly stopping for needful rest, and at length he found himself in the monastery of Portus Classis at Ravenna. Of a delicate constitution, worn with study, fatigue, and fasting,

he was ill. Accused of heresy, the doors of the monastery opened to him, not as a home, but a prison. An underground cell, damp and poisonous, was his resting-place. Without straw to cover its stone floor, without covering save the garments he wore, he was left to live or to die with seeming indifference. Sad and miserable as his condition was, the heart of one of the fraternity was touched with pity. Bringing fresh straw, he made a bed for the prisoner, bathed his head and his feet, and brought him clean garments from his own scanty wardrobe. Unobserved, he brought bread and figs. The sick man began to revive, strength returned, and he asked for books.

A new idea struck the prior. "Let us hear what this fellow will say," he said to the monks. "He claims to be learned; let us taste his eloquence."

The suggestion was received, and the plan made known to him.

"I can but die," he said to himself. "At least, let me die with the Bible in my hand. They have called me to speak, and God, my God, will strengthen me."

The day came; the monks assembled in the refectory. Holding the precious manuscript in his hand, Fra Geoffrey read to them from the apostles touching the Holy Spirit's influence, the efficacy of the atonement, counting works as nothing, and faith in Christ the foundation-stone: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

"Away with him!" cried the prior indignantly. "If this comes of his books, we have had enough."

"No! no! let him go on!" exclaimed one of the monks. "The fellow is crazed with folly; let us hear what the end may be."

Exasperated beyond himself, the prior sprang upon the enfeebled man, tore the manuscript from his hand, and began a vigorous beating about his head. At this the monk whose heart had been touched with compassion suggested, no doubt from pity, that they should free themselves from the fellow by putting him in a boat without oars and sending him out to sea.

"Ha! ha!" cried the prior; "that is good.

We will send him back to Rome. If he never gets there, it will not be our lookout, provided we start him rightly."

With all his precaution the humane man could not restrain them from binding the already helpless man. The boat, with its almost lifeless freight, was sent adrift; and now Fra Geoffrey lies upon the deck of the polacca, looking up to the blue sky, his poor lacerated body cared for by Christian friends, and his heart more and more stayed upon the divine promises, feeling the presence of the heavenly Father, and having the boldness to go himself to Jesus, without the interference of Virgin or saint.

Precious hours these were to Filostrato. With the hand of the sufferer in his own, he repeated portions of the Gospels, surprised to see the hold they had upon the heart of the monk, his enlightened understanding grasping truths made clear to him through the Spirit's influence.

Filostrato learned from Fra Geoffrey of the troops in Calabria, especially that Castle Montalto was occupied by the Viceroy and his suite.

The Fra knew nothing definite of the Count's death, but he knew that Marcel was taken from the prison of Cosenza and consigned to his own castle, a prisoner of state.

"With the Viceroy at Montalto our plans must of necessity change," Filostrato said to the helmsman.

"Under pretence of selling stores we can run into Fuscaldo, and from thence despatch a messenger with our good intentions," was the answer.

"True, but we must delay taking our young friend aboard—a plan that I had quite set my heart upon," was the reply.

With a heavy heart Filostrato once more set sail. Balancing the questions of running into Calabria and what they could do to liberate Marcel, his thoughts were suddenly checked by the appearance of a storm. Crowding on all sail, they endeavored to make the nearest port.

Brindisi possessed two harbors—one called the inner, and the other the outer, communicating by a narrow passage—and to enter either was the aim of the polacca's crew.

"If we can make the pass, we are safe," cried Filostrato.

The helmsman shook his head: "If my eye serves me, there is lightning enough in that cloud to sink every ship in the harbor."

"God grant that we reach there before it bursts!" said Fra Geoffrey, gazing steadily at the black, jagged mass charged with thunderbolts.

Nearer and nearer it came, until it seemed to fold them in. Then a less angry growl struck upon their ears, louder and more prolonged, and almost instantly the cloud shot forth shining lances of lurid light. Peal after peal of thunder echoed through the heavens, while the terrible glare of the fiery weapons filled the hearts of the sailors with consternation.

From his couch Fra Geoffrey gazed into the devouring blackness. So near to death through the malice of his foes, was it the anger of a righteous God poured out upon him because of his defection from the mother church? Accused of heresy, with anathemas showered upon him by reason of his apostasy, his soul struggling on to the light, and not yet free from a lin-

gering fondness for old dogmas, was he a Jonah for whose destruction the sea was clamorous?

The helmsman turned his eyes to the white face of the disturbed monk with a calm, firm expression that strengthened him.

At that instant the black, angry mass above them parted with a terrific crash, the entire vault was luminous, balls of flame hung from the jagged edges of the rent clouds, and the swift flashes darted like fiery serpents across the heavens. By their light a vessel was seen to roll heavily. Another vivid flash, another thunder-peal, and she parted, casting the crew and the passengers into the boiling deep.

"Out with the boat!" cried Filostrato.

"With God's help we can save them," shouted the helmsman in a hoarse voice.

The men worked with a will. One by one, the struggling victims were picked up. Three females, placed in a small boat before the ship parted, were found and brought on board the polacca. They were the Countess Montalto, with Isera and Lady Portia Giulia Polenta, on her way to Ravenna.

CHAPTER XXV.

LAST NOTICES OF GEOFFREY AND MARCEL.

SO much was the polacca injured by the storm that it was necessary to remain at Brindisi for some days. In the mean time a quick understanding sprang up between Filostrato and the Countess Montalto. Before favorable arrangements could be effected, however, it was necessary that they should be free from the espionage of Lady Portia Giulia.

"It was a most striking and merciful interposition; I feel anxious to return thanks in a becoming manner," said Lady Giulia as she conversed with the master of the polacca. "You must know that we were on our way from Rome to the convent San Stefano dell' Uliva at Ravenna. The Holy Father will be so grateful for the miraculous interposition in our favor!"

"There is no doubt but the hand of God was in it," was the brief reply.

"I am rejoiced that you recognize a sensible interference. In this age there are so many who ignore the blessed Virgin's influence! For myself, I feel utterly unworthy, and yet it was too marked, too irresistibly plain, to be set aside through modesty. Little as a public demonstration accords with my own feelings, I would have the whole world know it."—Then, turning to the Countess, "Do you not join me in this, dear Countess?"

"It was alone through God's mercy we came to land. Our thanks are but his due," was the reply.

"I am delighted, the Holy Father will be delighted. As soon as we reach the convent we will make a public demonstration," returned Lady Giulia.

"Do I understand that you desire to continue your journey?" demanded Filostrato.

"Certainly; we would like to go on with as little delay as possible."

"Fortunately for you, Brindisi is a place of resort for ships from every quarter. It will be strange if you do not find a vessel ready to sail immediately," was the answer.

"Considering the great damage done to the shipping, such a providence would be only a second interposition in our favor," Lady Giulia remarked to the Countess. "I must send word to His Eminence; we must have thanks in every chapel."

For a tempting handful of gold Filostrato found a ship ready to sail. Lady Giulia at once went aboard; the Countess and Isera did not immediately follow her. The ship was in motion; neither would the master put back. Thus, in spite of herself, Lady Giulia was carried away, and in keeping with Filostrato's plan it was several months before she reached Ravenna.

The intelligence Filostrato had to communicate did not surprise the Countess. Separated from the Count and her sons, she had long thought of them as dying under torture. Only as she was informed of Marcel's escape, the kindness of Christina, and the interest manifested by Lady Aurelia Landino, did she give way to weeping. Surrounded by enemies under the guise of friendship, she had felt that her feet were in a net, the hidden meshes closing

around her like bands of steel. Still, she had endeavored for Isera's sake to appear cheerful, trusting, hoping, that God would in his providence open a way of escape. Now she felt that her prayers were so far answered that a friend was raised up for her in her hour of need.

Making all haste in the repair of the ship, notwithstanding the promise exacted from the commander of the outward-bound vessel that Lady Portia Giulia should not find means to communicate with the Holy See, they left Brindisi during the darkness of night, and made their way to Cosenza, hopeful that Victor might be heard from if there. There was no intelligence, however, and with almost breaking hearts they turned away. We are not told how long the voyage, neither the strategy they employed to effect their purpose. But this we know: that months after, when John Guerin, another pastor in Calabria, met his death at the stake, a young man, pale and thin, was supported—nay, carried—on board a small vessel that immediately struck out for a ship lying off the harbor of Messina. After this we hear that Christina and the good Joan suffered a lingering

imprisonment, and at last death, because they gave comfort and kindness to a heretic, and finally assisted in his escape.

For two years the persecution of the Vaudois continued, and thousands perished. Innkeepers were threatened with severe penalties who should receive strangers without a note of safe-conduct from the priest of the parish, so that those who would escape were constrained to travel by night, passing rivers by fording, hiding in the woods, living upon roots or upon what they could timidly glean in the fields. Yet thus did a number of families, the females habited in male attire, succeed, after multiplied dangers and unparalleled fatigues, in making their way to Piedmont.

That there might not be one left, Pius IV. sent the Marquis of Butiana to accomplish the extirpation of heresy in Calabria, promising to reward his success with a cardinal's hat for his son.

Afterward the seat of the Holy See was transported to the opposite bank of the Tiber, to the same place which is said to have been occupied by the Circus of Nero, in which so many of the

primitive Christians were delivered over to the teeth of wild beasts. And those also were primitive Christians who perished at Cosenza, at La Guardia, and at St. Xisto; only for the fierce wild beasts of the pagans were substituted the priests, the monks, and the inquisitors of the Church of Rome.

But the time was coming when from the silent cell of an Augustine monk at Erfurt an influence was to spread among the nations, small at first, but growing brighter until the world should acknowledge the beauty and truth of that true religion of Christ whose leading features are charity and good-will, peace and love, harmony and united efforts to spread the truth as found in the word of God. To this work we find Fra Geoffrey giving the last years of his life, while Marcel of Montalto was one of its bright and shining lights.

A little more than three hundred years, and we find, not Fra Geoffrey, but Alexandre Gavazzi, born in Italy, educated for a priest, for years the right-hand man of the Pope and the standard-bearer of the church. This man dared to question, and finally to doubt, the infallibility

of the Pope, and to believe in the infallibility of the word of God, and so come from darkness into the light. As in former times, Gavazzi was suspected even in the Vatican, and fled to escape the Inquisition. In his seclusion he nursed the faith that Italy was to be free, and kept the lamp of God bright. And not only he, but numbers who held the pure gospel, were ready for the work the very moment that the words, "Rome is free!" ran along the lines of humanity. Henceforth the power is wrested from one man. Christians in Italy are free to think and to worship according to their own consciences. Happy day! day so long desired! And who may say that the spirits of those who went up through the fiery ordeal are not cognizant of what has taken place, striking their harps to sweeter music, and making the arches of heaven ring with the grand acclaim,

"Behold, what God hath wrought!"

THE END.

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